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**‘Exit, loyalty and voice:’ the experience of adult  
learners in the context of de- industrialisation  
in County Durham.**

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Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Edinburgh  
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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed:

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank and give recognition to the men and women of County Durham who participated in the research interviews for this study. Without their participation this study would not have been possible. The study reveals how they have experienced the devastating effects of de-industrialisation on their lives.

I would particularly like to thank Dr Jim Crowther who was outstanding in providing excellent supervision and guidance, and had endless patience in guiding me through this study. I would also like thank Dr Akwugo Emejulu and Dr Margaret Petrie for their excellent supervision and support.

Working at such a distance from the university I am also most grateful to IT Helpline staff and library staff at Moray House and George Square libraries for their ongoing support.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband John for his endless love and support.

## **Abstract**

### **‘Exit, loyalty and voice:’ the experience of adult learners in the context of de-industrialisation in County Durham.**

This thesis examines the effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of adult learners attending adult education programmes in the former coal mining and steel working communities of County Durham. It presents the outcomes of a qualitative study of life history stories which are ‘person centred’. Focusing on the subjective experiences of learners, both past and present, was an appropriate way in which the learner voice could be heard as well as helping to understand their experiences and views on the effects that de-industrialisation has had on their lives, and if lifelong learning was improving their life chances. The importance of social class and gender in configuring and understanding adult learner experiences are critical factors whilst, at the same time, the collective resources of these working class communities have been systematically undermined. Furthermore, the provision of publically funded adult education has declined dramatically since the 1980s. Through the prism of learners’ lives the study explores experiences of employability skills programmes and community adult education programmes on shaping the position, disposition and identity of learners who have experienced a major trauma to their communities, their families and themselves. Ontological insecurity, a product of de-industrialisation, has a critical impact on the lives of these adults.

The thesis adopts Hirschman’s (1970) framework of ‘Exit, Loyalty and Voice’, originally used to frame the responses of workers confronting the possibility of job losses in a firm, as a way of understanding the reactions of adult learners to the impact of de-industrialisation on communities. In Hirschman’s framework the relationship between exit, loyalty and voice followed a distinctive pattern. Loyalty, for example, was the opposite of voice, as people in a firm stayed silent in order to be saved from job loss. In this study, loyalty to the community has enabled individuals to benefit from support and community provision, which has given them a lifeline for survival and a step on the way to finding a voice. Exit, in the original framework, involved proactive workers getting ‘ahead of the curve’ by finding alternative employment before others. In this study, employability skills training – as a resource for exit – does not deliver. Instead, it systematically demoralises individuals and undermines their capacity to act. It involves churning learners between welfare and more training programmes and, where and when available, into short-term work. The overall impact has resulted in the social exclusion of these learners from the labour market and from the community – the opposite of agency. It is argued that this is a paradox given that social and economic inclusion was an aim of lifelong learning policies.

The thesis challenges the claim of neoliberal ideology that purports to promote the freedom of individuals to determine their own fate. Those attending employability skills programmes are expected to find solutions to structural problems, and are subjected to coercive methods through psychological interventions that are expected to bring about attitudinal behaviour changes to achieve employability. It is argued that this is a paradox given deficient labour market conditions which are beyond the control of the learner. Attention is given to public sector community adult education that once offered liberating models of adult education, but have now been subjected to the logic of neoliberal governmentality. This is creating new ‘subjectivities’ for educators, who are being coerced to deliver learning for the economy rather than social purpose education. What has emerged is a new role of the employability trainer.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **What is the study about?**

This aim of this thesis was to examine how people living in the former coalfield and steel making communities of County Durham have experienced de-industrialisation and what role adult education plays in such contexts. Through life history stories, the thesis provides an understanding of the impoverished and devalued lives of those studied. It explores the marginalisation of community adult education provision which could have enabled people to respond proactively to the effects of de-industrialisation at both individual and community level. It explains that as community adult education declined this was replaced by learning for the economy through employability skills programmes. These have been inadequate in addressing the real needs and interests of such communities.

### **Personal and professional interest**

My motivation to undertake this study emerged at a time when my role in community adult education was made redundant due to austerity measures. In 1948 I was born into and raised in the steel town of Consett. The social history of my family is that they arrived in Consett as starving immigrants from Ireland at the time of the potato famine in the late 1840s. The men in the family found work at the then Derwent Iron Company that was formed in 1841 and in the long term became known as Consett Steel Works. My family dedicated their working lives to the steel works from the late 1840s until 1980 when the neoliberal policies of a Thatcherite Government brought about its demise, as well as the closure of the County Durham coalfields in 1985. The closure of the steel works and the coalfields that families were so dependent upon for a living brought mass unemployment and deprivation to this county. Living, working, and studying throughout this time of devastating

consequences for County Durham, including that of my own family, has ensured that I used my education to contribute to improving the lives of others from these communities through adult education.

By 2010, I had spent 30 years in adult education as both a student but also, mostly, as a worker. I had experienced not only considerable social and economic decline alongside increasing social inequalities but also the brutality of neoliberal policies on community adult education services within both the public and voluntary and community sectors. The emphasis for funding became increasingly to deliver learning for the economy rather than an education that would address the social reality of everyday lives and the inequalities that people were experiencing. In 2010, austerity measures that closed down Local Strategic Learning Partnerships<sup>1</sup> that addressed a multiple of educational needs within local communities also brought about the demise of my Local Learning Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator role. This motivated me to pursue my PhD to research at the most intimate level the effects of de-industrialisation and its ongoing effects through neoliberal policies on the lives of adult learners.

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1. <sup>1</sup> A local strategic partnership (LSP) is a single body that: brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together; is a non-statutory, non-executive organisation; operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level; and should be aligned with local authority boundaries. Tackling key issues for local people such as crime, jobs, education, health and housing requires a range of local organisations working together.  
[http://www.govopps.co.uk/guidance\\_db\\_files/guidances/guid\\_09.pdf](http://www.govopps.co.uk/guidance_db_files/guidances/guid_09.pdf)

## **Professional experience**

The precarious nature of adult education which is built upon short-term funding ensures that its workers are provided only with short-term contracts and no security. Consequently, I undertook many different roles in adult education and in doing so worked across different projects that offered different models of adult education.

My interest in adult education came from my own personal experience of returning to learning through the New Opportunities for Women Course and the Access to Higher Education Course that I attended at the University of Newcastle Continuing Education Department. I participated in these studies as a young mother from 1976 to 1982 until I entered higher education at the University of Newcastle Theology Department from 1982 to 1985. On completion of my B.A. Honours Degree at university I taught on a liberal adult education programme. I worked in two colleges of further education on a part-time basis teaching 'A' level Religious Studies. These academic studies became obsolete at a time of high unemployment and policy changes from lifelong education to lifelong learning for the economy. Such academic studies were replaced by National Vocational Qualifications.

I now found myself working on an economic model in community settings in different training roles to support unemployed men and women in finding work in a deficient labour market. In addition, I facilitated staff development for others working in similar roles.

In 1990, I attended the University of Durham Continuing Education Department (part-time) where I completed a Master of Arts Degree in Adult and Continuing Education (June 1993). The focus of my dissertation was 'Good News for the Poor', using Freire's critical pedagogy. This enabled me to design and deliver a liberating version of adult education that enabled those who were marginalised to express their

socio-economic concerns. These concerns were collected and channelled through Church Action on Poverty for social action. This was undertaken in the role of student and volunteer.

Having completed my MA in Adult and Continuing Education I wished to pursue a role in bringing adult education opportunities into community settings to enable those for whom formal education had provided little benefit. Due to the precarious nature of community adult education I took up different short-term roles in community adult education in the local authority, the voluntary and community sector, and also in colleges of further education, to co-ordinate and deliver second chance education and community-based and informal education for personal, social or community development and change. This culminated in a role as a Local Learning Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator where my role was to improve health and wellbeing in de-industrialised communities through community adult education. This was a partnership arrangement of a college of further education, health services, including mental health teams, and public, voluntary and community sector organisations, including government funded Sure Start programmes.

Of the above models of adult education, I particularly valued the liberating model of 'Good News for the Poor' as it enabled those who were marginalised to have a voice and bring their concerns to a higher level. However, my main focus was community-based and informal education for personal, social and community development. This provision really engaged communities who had become disillusioned and demoralised due to the effects of de-industrialisation, and enabled them to have more confidence by engaging in local meetings, helping others in the community and in progressing to second chance education. The liberal model of education, which is viewed as education for its own sake and personal fulfilment, through 'A' level Religious Studies that attracted women who were miner's wives and were working in the soup kitchens at the time of the Miners' Strike (1985), was also very valuable as it offered them a liberal education that is now no longer available to women in local

colleges. One of the miner's wives studying on this course became ordained as one of the first women Anglican Priests. This rich variety of provision is now diminished due to significant changes in policy and the economic model, now morphed into Employability Skills Programme<sup>2</sup> as dominant. Such programmes, as this study will reveal, socially control those with low level skills and few or no qualifications in panopticon conditions in community bases.

### **Why it matters: the background to the study**

According to Linkon (2013, pp.51-52) "the historical event of de-industrialisation matters today not only because of what happened when plants closed but also because it continues to affect people and places". Given the scale of unemployment, deprivation and poor health in County Durham since the time of the Miners' Strike (1985), this study matters. In this section, I define County Durham as a former coalfield area and how, 30 years after the Miners' Strike (1985), it is one of the most deprived local authority areas in England:

The former coalfields are a distinctive part of England, Scotland and Wales. Their long history of mining has moulded their economy, culture and landscape. It has also shaped their settlement pattern. Because coal can only be mined where it is found, many mining towns and villages grew up in locations away from Britain's main urban centres. Coalfield communities often relied on this single industry to an extraordinary extent. The contraction of the British coal industry is well known. Since the year-long miners' strike of 1984/5 the coal industry has disappeared.

Foden (et al., 2014, p.9)

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<sup>2</sup> Employability Skills Programme- The Welfare Reform Act (2012) section 16 "work related requirements" emphasised mandatory work activity schemes that require welfare claimants to: (1) attend a skills assessment; (2) improve personal presentation; (3) participate in training; (4) participate in an employment programme; (5) undertaking work experience or work placement; (6) a work-focused health related assessment which means the extent to which the person's capability for work may be improved by taking steps in relation to their physical or mental health condition. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/section/16>



The loss of the coalfields and the steel making industry have resulted in widespread deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015) identified County Durham as the 62<sup>nd</sup> most deprived local authority in England out of 326. Since the time of the Miners' Strike, 43% of coalfield neighbourhoods are among the most deprived 30% of Local Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Britain. County Durham is well above this average of 43%, with 51% of Local Super Output Areas (Foden et al., 2014, p.26). L.S.O.A.s can be defined as the most deprived pockets of deprivation within local authority wards (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2016)<sup>3</sup>. In comparison with other coalfield neighbourhood areas in England, County Durham has significantly higher levels of deprivation than most and is one of the most deprived local authority areas in England.  
(Appendix 1, County Durham socio-economic statistics.)

As will be subsequently argued, de-industrialisation not only brought about mass unemployment but it has also reshaped family life through the restructuring of traditional gender roles. The economic shock of de-industrialisation had different implications for men and women who were now surplus to requirements. The role of women was to take a different form from that of respectable domesticity as out of financial necessity they took up insecure, low paid, unskilled, non-unionised work in local factories, but even these closed with time. The reshaping of the economy into a

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<sup>3</sup> The Indices of Deprivation 2015 measures deprivation in small areas across England. These small areas are called Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and are a standard way of measuring pockets of deprivation in local authority wards. Based on seven different domains of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services; Living Environment Deprivation.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/57915/1/English\\_Indices\\_of\\_Deprivation\\_2015\\_-\\_Frequently\\_Asked\\_Questions\\_Dec\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/57915/1/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Frequently_Asked_Questions_Dec_2016.pdf)

precarious one with feminised workplaces did not attract these ex-manual workers who had little confidence for work in these new industries. Men remained at home and became long-term unemployed.

The health implications of the above trend fit a pattern. Greater deterioration in the mental health of men occurred the longer they were unemployed, and had no routine or financial security (Jahod et al., 1933). In the case of these de-industrialised communities, this was to create a culture of anomie. A loss of work and working class identity were exacerbated by poverty, as well as the restructuring of the traditional roles of men and women. Pimlott (1981, p.51) has shown that unemployed men saw redundancy as a sign of personal failure although its true cause was a crisis within capitalism that was beyond their control. The life stories in this study describe what followed was a breakdown in family life through patriarchal oppression accompanied by alcoholism and drugs. Divorce became prevalent, and it was women who began to bear the brunt of these problems as their mental health declined and family life broke down. According to Seabrook (1982, pp.1-12), “limitless leisure” was not healthy for family life as “violence, marital breakdown and mental health difficulties often followed”.

De-industrialisation, in breaking the routine and practices of the everyday social, economic and cultural life of these communities, brought about increasing anxiety and insecurity that not only redefined traditional roles but also redefined family life in the Durham coalfields. Appendix 2 explains the statistics on domestic abuse and alcohol abuse and poor mental health in men and women in County Durham.

Although there has been the establishment of some high tech industries, and more planned for the future within County Durham, these jobs mostly require those with a university education and high-level skills for the knowledge economy. This is no solution to the problem of the hard core of long-term unemployed such as those in this study who for many years have been churned between welfare and precarious,

low-paid jobs. Foden (et al., 2014, pp.17-18) points out that the number of jobs located in the coalfields in England compared to the size of the working population (the “job density”) shows the coalfields in an “unfavourable light”. County Durham has a very low job density at 48 jobs per 100 residents of working age, with one third of all jobs being part-time in coalfield areas. Such a deficient labour market has sustained high levels of unemployment which has created a culture of worklessness. Those who are part of this culture are not just the unemployed but also those who, since the time of the Miners’ Strike (1985), have been long-term unemployed and are now economically inactive and unable to work due to poor mental and physical health. Foden et al. (2014, 6-7&14) point out that, in County Durham, the figures for:

Those economically inactive are 87,200 (26.8%) and this includes 27,700 who are long term sick often due to the psychological effects of de-industrialisation and industrial diseases (p.6-7)...Unemployment in the coalfields was held in check only by the very large increase in economic inactivity...this inactivity [is] a form of ‘hidden unemployment’ (p.14).

The communities within which the learners live are places of worklessness, as the percentage of the population that is dependent on welfare benefits is higher than the national average. In County Durham, 12.7% of residents are economically active and looking for work and claiming out of work benefits compared to a national average of 5.2%. In the areas of the county where this research study took place, those who were experiencing worklessness and claiming out of work benefits was higher than the county average. North Durham had variations between its wards of 13% to 16%, with East Durham at 18%. (NOMIS County Durham Official Labour Market Profile for Durham, June 2015). In reality, unemployment is far higher in the coalfields as 87,200 people who are economically inactive are not taken into account.

The economic and social conditions in these ex-coalfield and steel work communities of County Durham, 30 years on from the Miner’s Strike (1985), show that poverty is endemic in this county.

(Foden et al., 2014, p.26)

The Miners' Strike (1985) and the closure of the coalfields and steel works have not faded from the memory of those in this study. Their effects are felt in the present through long-term unemployment and deprivation, and especially poor health, including mental health, which is prevalent in County Durham. 8.6% of the population are experiencing bad to very bad health with 12.6% of residents experiencing a long-term health problem. Poor mental health in the population is higher than the national average and stands at 14.87% compared to 11.68% (Foden et al., 2014, p.26).

The health and wellbeing outcomes of County Durham are shaped by its socio-economic factors, and such social determinants as parental status, employment status, income, housing, place of residence, education and environment. The more deprived an area is, the poorer are the health outcomes, which would be expected. Overall, the health and wellbeing of people living in County Durham is generally worse than the England average, as are the levels of deprivation as outlined in Appendix 3 Durham Health Profile (2016).

In addition to the levels of deprivation and the prevalence of poor health and mental health in the county, there are the cumulative effects of austerity measures and welfare reform since 2010 that continue to impact on this population. Foden et al., (2014, p.60) point out there is an estimated impact of welfare reform (district data) of £590 per annum loss per working age adult. Data from the Durham County Council Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Report, Oct 2015, show ways in which welfare reform is impacting on this population with a loss of different welfare benefits and the effects of sanctioning, which are increasing child poverty in the county. Appendix 4 explains the impact of austerity measures on the county as outlined in the Durham County Council Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Report (October 2015)

Since 2010, austerity measures that brought budget cuts to local authority funding in England have hit deprived areas disproportionately hard. These financial cuts have driven many voluntary and community organisations in the coalfields into crisis, and often led to substantial redundancies (Foden et al., 2014, p. 7).

The Trade Union Council (2014, (a), p.4) estimated that total council income will have fallen in real terms by 37% by 2015/16, which has had led to disproportionate cuts in deprived areas in North East England. For the poor, this loss of funding for services was compounded by the Welfare Reform Act, 2012, that made substantial changes to their welfare benefits (Trade Union Council, 2014 (b), pp.9-10).

According to the Universities of Durham (2013, p.7), the North East will lose an estimated £380m of welfare benefits due to the benefit cap. Across the UK, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimates that by 2018 funding for the sector will be £1.7 billion lower than it was in 2010 (TUC, 2014 (a), p.52). According to O'Hara (2014, p.249), "In the North East – the English region most hit by cuts [and] the impact of austerity on voluntary organisations was shattering".

As austerity unfolded, a picture emerged of drastically scaled-back services of local voluntary organisations, many of whom delivered community adult education. According to Voluntary Organisation Network North East (VONNE, 2013, p.4), "It is clear that third sector organisations have faced the brunt of cuts, despite the pleas from all sides not to cut the sector disproportionately".

It was the tsunami of public sector budget cuts on women's voluntary and community sector projects, and the closing down of women only spaces that were needed more than ever in de-industrialised areas, and needed more than ever in times of austerity, that caused outrage against the state. According to the North East Women's Network (NEWN, June 2013, p.1):

Women's organisations prevent problems from happening or from escalating, thus saving the government money and relieving the burden on public services...these organisations are dealing with increased demand and diminishing resources and many are facing closure.

A women's voluntary community sector organisation that participated in this study went into administration with the:

Loss of 1,800 learning places and support services that helped 600 women in 2011-2012...we have continuously struggled with funding difficulties and cash-flow problems and have always managed to 'ride the storm'. However, in this current economic climate we have been faced with many changes and restrictions to central funding within education.

(Third Sector Online, 6 August 2012)

Two workers from this women's voluntary organisation resisted changes and became activists. They salvaged the organisation by establishing it as a social enterprise. In doing so, they provide a vital service that continues to improve the life chances of marginalised women experiencing the long term effects of de-industrialisation that are now being intensified by austerity measures.

To summarise, the socio-economic and health data reveal that County Durham is experiencing the long-term effects of de-industrialisation but that ongoing austerity measures and welfare reform from 2010 are also biting. All have had a cumulative effect, contributing to an increase in poverty for individuals and families, and increasing child poverty. Austerity measures that have brought about cutbacks in funding to public and voluntary and community services have contributed to drastic cuts in services to those most in need, and a significant reduction of staff from these services. The demise of these services, including community adult education that has, for some, offered first steps back into learning and social inclusion to those who

have experienced the effects of socio-economic changes, will reduce their life chances. This is nothing less than a major social justice issue.

### **How I approached the study: exit, loyalty and voice**

Hirschman's (1970) book, "Exit, Loyalty and Voice", sought to explain how people react to economic crisis when they are employed and threatened with potential job loss. Exit can mean attempts by workers to leave before the downturn hits them so that they can exert a degree of individual control over the timing of their departure and, if possible, make the transition into new employment rather than being made redundant. Loyalty involves workers trying to identify more closely with their firm so that if, and when, cutbacks are made, their commitment to the company will favour them. Voice involves individual and collective effort to resist the imposition of cutbacks by the mobilisation of employees and political support. Furthermore, these reactions influence each other. Exit undermines loyalty and evades the need for voice. Loyalty is the opposite of voice but has similarities with exit as individuals seek to protect their individual interests. However, the meaning and significance of reactions at the level of the firm may be different to that at the level of the community. One of the aims of this study was to use this framework as a way of categorising reactions but also to ascertain if the relations between these patterns of reactions change significantly.

The rationale to deploy 'exit, loyalty and voice' within an adult education community context was to examine the ways in which learners born and raised in de-industrialised areas who were long term unemployed, and participating in employability skills training programmes and community adult education, have found how their experience has contributed to rebuilding their lives (if at all). A further reason to deploy the 'exit, loyalty and voice' framework to this study was to explore how adult education has changed in response to de-industrialisation. In a community context, exit is used in relation to welfare claimants who are mandated to attend employability skills training courses to gain the skills and attitudes for

employability (which it is presumed they lack) in order to find (in)secure work. A decline in funding for community adult education in favour of learning for employability has rapidly increased the delivery of employability skills training programmes in de-industrialised areas. Community adult education now exists on the margins of education, often in terms of self-help provision or some other mutation of what was previously understood as community adult education.

My methodology was to use a life history approach for the collection of data to investigate the effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of learners. Life history stories are historically situated in time, culture and place, and under particular social circumstances. They focus on the individual, where each single life is reflected upon and meaning made of that person's life through the production of a life story. A life history approach enabled me, as a researcher, to construct stories with the learners within the local historical and socio-economic context, which I have presented. It allowed me to investigate the effects of de-industrialisation, and whether the Employability Skills Programme and community adult education were shaping their position, disposition and identity. Taking a life history approach to data collection enabled new knowledge to be constructed in relation to exit, loyalty and voice within a community context through the meanings that learners attached to their experiences.

One of the central findings of this study is how employability programmes in this context achieve the opposite of what they claim. In Hirschman's terms, exit involves proactive employees moving ahead and taking control of their circumstances through individual acts of foresight. Instead, the argument of this thesis is that these programmes control learners and weaken them as subjects who, instead of expressing agency, become anxious and fearful. What they do is exit in a social sense from their communities by becoming inward-looking and separated from community life. This is in contrast to the experience of learners in community adult education, where the sense of loyalty takes on a different meaning. The experience of the study's informants is that it creates subjects who become empowered to take control of their



situation and actively contribute to rebuilding their communities. In doing so, loyalty is not only linked to reclaiming one's respectability but also to having more control over one's life; that is to say, finding a voice.

### **The changing resource context of adult education**

Funding allocated for adult learning nationally was cut as follows: 2011-12: £3.7 billion; 2012-2013: £3.4 billion; 2013-2014: £3.3 billion (University and College Union Newsletter, No.35, 2010 (a), p.1). According to Archer (2013), "the goals around adult education are often the first to be dropped in the face of political prioritisation or economic austerity". The goal had increasingly become focused on more training for economic success, with apprenticeships being a priority, with funding increasing from £360 million to £648 million by 2012-13 to provide 75,000 new apprenticeship places (UCU Newsletter 2010(a),p.1) The Skills Funding Agency (the Executive Agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills) in 2013 to 2014 was allocated £3.6 billion to support 3 million adult learners, of which only £210 million per annum remained protected for Community Learning until 2016. After 2016, Community Learning would be no longer have a ring-fenced budget.

The Skills Funding Agency, *Skills Funding Statement* (2012, pp.5-11) announced that the adult education budget could also be used for a new, government training programme titled Employability Skills Training Programme. The priority would be given to those 19 years plus on Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance, that is, those on 'active benefits' where they must seek work and where skills training would help them into work. The curriculum should provide the opportunity to achieve a National Vocational Qualification at level 2 or study Foundation Learning (pre-level 2) if aged 19 to 24 years to progress to level 2 or above. English and Maths qualifications such as GCSEs, or functional English and Maths qualifications through the Qualifications Credits Framework (QCF) would be

funded, as would those studying for an NVQ level 2 qualification. Learners aged 24 plus could access an Advanced Learning Loan to study for a level 3 or above in further education.

In addition to gaining English and Maths qualifications, learners were also expected to undertake employability skills and other work related qualifications such as Health and Safety at Work, Food Hygiene, First Aid at Work and Fork Lift Truck. This was the curriculum recommendation of the Department of Business Information and Skills in offering a “broader package for those claiming benefits and in the Work Related Activity Group attending the Employability Skills Programme” (SFA, 2012, p.11).

Community learning provides accessible and inclusive learning opportunities for people in deprived communities. It is provided in familiar settings such as community centres, schools and within voluntary sector projects where people are more confident to re-engage with learning. In 2013, the Skills Funding Agency described Community Learning as a:

Broad range of learning that brings together adults, often of different ages and backgrounds to pursue an interest or address a need, acquire a new skill, become healthier or learn how to support their children...[community learning] supports the wider government policies of localism, social justice, stronger families, digital inclusion and social mobility...[the Community Learning offer must be] locally determined through a strong local partnership with plans and strategies and be underpinned by engagement with communities and local authorities

(Skills Funding Agency, Presentation on Community Learning, 2013-14, p.23).

*The Skills Funding Agency Funding Rules 2014-2015* changed the focus of Community Learning as identified in the above statement to one of employability and meeting the needs of the local labour market. The criteria for learners eligible to be fully funded through Community Learning is similar to those on the government's Employability Skills Training Programme as being available to those who are in "receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance who study for an English and maths qualification or attend courses to help them move into work" (SFA 2015, pp.125-126). Individuals who are unemployed and not receiving these state benefits and who want to enter into employment through Community Learning can only be "fully funded at the discretion of the provider...[and] that learning is directly relevant to both the individual's employment prospects and the needs of the local labour market" (p.126). The curriculum that the funding will support is identical to the government's Employability Skills Programme:

English and maths...Health and Safety for Work, Fork Lift Truck, Food Hygiene, First Aid at Work, Security Guarding, Door Supervision and the Security Industry Authority (SIA) Certificate for public space surveillance.

(SFA, 2015, p.125, note 17)

In 2014, in engaging stakeholders in the research project I recognised that there was considerable overlap between the new government Employability Skills Programme and Community Learning opportunities at a local level. Skills Funding Agency Funding Rules and funding allocations for the purpose of an employability skills curriculum, along with fee and remission policies for learners, has changed the landscape of community education in County Durham.

Community adult education and community development have a significant role to play in engaging the working class who are experiencing increasing social inequalities. In devaluing the traditional models of adult education through loss of

funding and prioritising an economic model, any public spaces for critical thinking and dialogue to address social inequalities are missing at community level.

Community Learning was to experience a further blow from 2016-2017 onwards when a new Adult Further Education Budget was introduced. This was outlined in a letter by Nick Boles, Minister of State for Skills, on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 to the Skills Funding Agency (Foster 2017, p.16):

The new Adult Education Budget is a single funding line which replaces what has been 3 separate funding lines: funding for Adult Further Education outside of apprenticeships (previously held with the Adult Skills Budget); Community Learning; and Discretionary Learning Support.

This letter went on to say that of this £1.5 billion for the new Adult Education Budget:

We will no longer provide a separate Community Learning budget...As part of the move to simplification and localism, all learning providers will be able to offer non-accredited learning if providers and local commissions consider such activity as relevant.

Bowles (cited in Foster, 2010, Briefing Paper No:7708, April 2017, p.16).

Appendix 5 - 2010-2016 Actual expenditure on Adult Further Education by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

The University and College Union (2016) points out that:

The Adult Skills Budget is already under severe pressure having fallen by almost 40% since 2009. Due to the government's focus on apprenticeships, the cut to ASB has had a disproportionately negative effect on other types of adult learning, with the budget for non-apprenticeship learning falling 24% between 2014-15 and 2015-16. It is therefore likely that the total amount

spent on community learning will fall in 2016-2017 as colleges choose to spend more on vocationally focused provision in line with government priorities.

(University and College Union, Policy Briefing, January 2016(b), p.3)

To summarise, the significant shift to learning for the economy through employability skills training has transformed the adult education dimension of Community Learning. In refiguring adult education in this way, it has also refigured funding to be allocated to learning for the economy. Community Learning under present funding rules no longer has its own budget but must fight its corner with commissioning bodies if it is to survive. This realignment is at the expense of the broader social purpose and democratic strands of education. In doing so, it has undermined and devalued these traditions to the point of exclusion, and many of those who would have participated in and benefited from this really useful education are becoming socially excluded.

## **Overview of the thesis**

Chapter 2 of the thesis explores the impact of de-industrialisation from the early 1980s, and how this was intensified through neoliberal policies and ideology that gained speed in later years, on the former coal mining and steel making areas of County Durham. The chapter draws on the wider sociological literature of the social trauma of de-industrialisation, neoliberal strategies for governance, and the resultant social divisions and wellbeing implications that people have experienced in this county. Neoliberal governance and policies that brought about de-industrialisation and replaced traditional industries with flexible capitalism in the service sector industries have not only restructured the economy but have also brought about significant transformations in working class communities, and restructured their way of life from one of established patterns of work routine and collective security to one

of individual anxiety and communal fragmentation. What has emerged is a localised precariat who have few employment protection rights, and people who live without dignity due to the demands of the market and whose characters are corroding under the weight of uncertainty of what the future will hold.

Chapter 3 traces the dominant social character of public education for the working class from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The chapter critically engages with the literature on different models of adult education that are key to the argument in this chapter. The chapter not only explores the dominant economic model of adult education but also its different traditions that offered an alternative education. These traditions were personal development, social purpose, and radical education that provided a range of education opportunities whereby communities could collectively generate knowledge on matters of concern to them in their everyday lives. The chapter explains that these traditions suffered a demise when they were contested by European and UK lifelong learning policies that diminished lifelong education policy in favour of lifelong learning, for learning to be productive for the economy. In doing so, lifelong learning now has a narrow focus as it does not address the personal and democratic strands of adult education. This has reconfigured community adult education, as we once knew it, to the needs of the economy. In doing so, public sector community adult education has become controlled through neoliberal governmentality. This is creating new ‘subjectivities’, who are being coerced to deliver learning for the economy rather than social purpose education. The dominant social character of education has become economistic i.e. the only thing it focuses on is an economic rationale. The 21<sup>st</sup> century contemporary model of ‘employability’ is a continuation and accentuation of this pattern. A new way forward is proposed through learning for democracy, which offers an alternative key purpose for education in unequal societies.

In Chapter 4, the focus is on an explanation of, and justification for, my research approach and the methods used to underpin this small scale, qualitative research

study, to collect data of the learners' experiences of the effects of de-industrialisation. My research questions are set out at the start of this chapter. I justify my reasons for the qualitative research methods used, and in particular the life history method, and provide a rationale for my choice of this approach. I explain and describe my sample and the pre-interview stage of preparing and planning semi-structured interviews. The interview process, transcribing of data, and validity of transcripts are also presented and issues highlighted. In my approach to data analysis I used grounded theory as it provides the researcher with a framework and systematic approach to data analysis through coding, categorising and themes to inform theory. The process of grounded theory took me from raw data to the theories of churning and ontological insecurity that give insight into the actual problems and experiences of the research participants. This is followed by a discussion and outline of the ethical approach taken to working with people who are marginalised. The findings of the study are presented in the following three chapters on 'outcasts on the inside', Ontological Insecurity, and Exit, Loyalty and Voice.

Chapter 5 is the first to present the findings of the research, based on a sample of six men who attended employability skills training and find themselves as 'outsiders on the inside'. An analysis of their life stories reveals the multiple effects of de-industrialisation on their lives and that of their communities. The life stories also reveal that employability skills training is not working to 'exit' these learners into work. The reader is introduced to the themes of churning, surveillance and identity to show why 'exit' is not working. The chapter explains that employability skills programmes are premised on the notion that unemployed individuals have skill deficiencies and that they must constantly be participating in repetitive skills training that will provide them with the characteristics to be ready to exit unemployment to supply a precarious labour market. Skill deficits are the problem that individuals need to rectify if they are going to exit unemployment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess and the way in which they use those assets and present them to employers. It is argued that the broader context in which these skills are supposed to be of value is ignored and downplayed, as the individual is held accountable rather than labour market

conditions and wider social, economic and institutional factors that influence a person's ability to find work. Learners are subjected to psychological interventions that are expected to bring about attitudinal behavioural changes deemed necessary to achieve employability. Blame is apportioned to the learner rather than the labour market for not gaining employment. Increasingly, the use of welfare and benefit sanctions in government policy is being deployed, to discipline unemployed people into repetitive and fruitless searches for work that churns these learners between welfare, employability skills training, and low-paid precarious jobs. It is argued that the methods used in employability skills training increase anxiety in the learners thus weakening an individual's character. The process of de-industrialisation has not only scarred the community, which has been blighted by structural inequalities, but also the identities of people who are experiencing a very different sense of exit: that is, exit from the social life of the community.

In Chapter 6 the findings are presented of a sample of 6 women and 2 men who attended community adult education. These findings reveal that ontological insecurity is the hidden outcome of de-industrialisation that increases anxiety within a population. Ontological insecurity has become a form of social control in the lives of these participants, as fear of the past still resonates in the present. The reader is introduced to themes of destruction of kinship networks; restructuring of gender roles; and devalued lives that give testimony to the learners' experiences of the effects of de-industrialisation. I explore how the closure of traditional industries brought about the disintegration of kinship networks that were essential in providing mutual aid and emotional support to contain anxiety in an industrial population in times of uncertainty; the loss of traditional gender roles and how these roles became restructured to meet the requirements of the labour market and redefined family life; and how de-industrialisation was not a one off historical event but an ongoing process that continued through brutal neoliberal policies to define and devalue lives. It is argued that class has been produced in these communities by a political elite who have devalued the working class through de-industrialisation, and by political elites and the media, who circulate demeaning opinions and judgement, that have further devalued working class lives. I illustrate how devaluation has been resisted by



learners, and through redemptive life stories I explain how the learners have reclaimed their respectability through community adult education. The stories show that it is possible to have respectability that does not require traditional roles for men and women. When the traditional role of men and women disappeared and family life became fragmented they needed to find a new way of becoming respectable. Once educated, and by proving that they could learn, they began to rebuild their communities by providing adult education, care and emotional support to others. Through this, a new source of respectability emerged that was different to the traditional roles of the past. Respectability, in this context, is closely related to 'loyalty' in a specific way.

In Chapter 7, the conceptual framework of Hirschman's (1970) model of Exit, Loyalty and Voice is applied to explore a cross comparison of the ways in which learners involved in employability training programmes and community adult education have found how their experience has contributed to rebuilding their lives (if at all). In doing so, I identify if 'exit' for work is working through employability skills training, and if community adult education has produced learners who are rebuilding their communities through loyalty and voice. The chapter also explores how adult education has changed in response to de-industrialisation.

Community adult education now exists on the margins of education, often in terms of self-help provision or some other mutation of what was previously understood as community adult education. One of the central findings of this study is how employability programmes in this context achieve the opposite of what they claim. In Hirschman's terms, exit involves proactive employees moving ahead and taking control of their circumstances through individual acts of foresight. Instead, the argument of this chapter is how these programmes control learners and weaken them as subjects who, instead of expressing agency, become anxious and fearful. What they do is exit in a social sense from their communities by becoming inward-looking and separated from community life. This is in contrast to the experience of learners in community adult education, where the sense of loyalty takes on a different

meaning. Hirschman's (1970) conceptual framework shows that 'loyalty' is a reaction that reaffirms an individual sense of disempowerment, of not speaking out, and not taking the 'exit' route. For the study's informants the findings show that 'loyalty' to the community creates subjects who become empowered to take control of their situation and actively contribute to rebuilding their communities. In doing so, loyalty is not only linked to reclaiming one's respectability but also having more control over one's life; that is to say, finding a voice.

The chapter argues that the Employability Skills Programme and the liberating models of community adult education create very different subjectivities. The chapter also argues that community adult education has, through loyalty and voice, diminished exit thus strengthening communities. Alternatively, the Employability Skills Programme diminished loyalty and voice, as its learners exited in a social sense which "prevents recuperation of communities" (Hirschman 1970, p.120).

The final chapter presents the conclusions of the thesis. It revisits the key findings of the study and re-emphasises the main arguments about the contested nature of lifelong education and its personal, democratic strands and the growing dominance of the economic model: the way in which de-industrialisation followed by the restructuring of the economy through precarious employment has transformed the meaning of work and a traditional way of life. This has brought about the demise of the working class, who now live an insecure existence that increases anxiety amongst the population. A key effect of de-industrialisation has been the way in which ontological insecurity has redefined family life and increased poor mental health in both men and women; working class identities have been fractured by structural economic change, the decline of traditional industries, and the fragmentation of communities that were once dependent upon them.

The working class have little control in choosing an identity in precarious times, as they do not have resources to do so; a key conceptual and ideological shift central to

this pattern is the rise of employability rather than a focus on unemployment. Employability is the responsibility and ability of an individual to become employed rather than, necessarily, the state of employment itself. Through the conceptual framework of ‘exit, loyalty and voice’ we know that exit is not working, as learners attending employability skills training programmes are subject to disciplinary, psychological interventions that do not increase their chances of securing work but increase feelings of failure in welfare claimants, as they shift the blame of unemployment from systematic failure in the labour market to the personal failure of the individual. In seeking solutions to structural unemployment, individuals are blamed for being jobless rather than an acknowledgment that this is due to a deficient labour market.

Neoliberal governmentality has brought about a significant loss of community adult education that once offered liberating models of adult education; however, Hirschman’s framework highlights the effectiveness of community adult education in nurturing loyalty to one’s community. Community adult education is a democratising force that engages with the social reality of the everyday lives of those experiencing socio-economic inequalities. Its learners are treated as citizens who have something to contribute to others and their community. In this study, those whose lives had been demoralised, once they had been educated, showed loyalty to their community. In doing so, it enabled them to reclaim their respectability as they began rebuilding their community, rebuilding the lives of others, and creating a voice for the marginalised. The role of community adult education is very important in making these connections of loyalty and voice in community settings. These forms of provision still have a significant role to play in today’s society in engaging the working class, who are experiencing social inequalities.

## **Chapter 2**

### **De-industrialisation and its consequences in County Durham**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the impact of de-industrialisation from the early 1980s and its subsequent acceleration through neoliberal policies and ideology, in later years, on the former coal mining and steel making areas of County Durham. The chapter draws on the wider sociological literature of the social trauma of de-industrialisation, neoliberal strategies for governance, and the resultant social divisions and well-being implications that people have experienced in this region. In the turn towards flexible capitalism, the meaning of work, from one of routine work roles, has changed and work no longer offers long-term security. Instead, we witness a process of what has been termed “individualization”, which involves transforming one’s “identity” from a “given” into a “task” (Bauman, 2000, pp.31-32). Insecurity and its consequences are normalised and the collective resources working class communities once possessed have become fragmented and divided. Human beings are no longer ‘born into’ their identities, as in the past, but are given the responsibility to construct an identity in circumstances where they have little material security or power and, as a result, social divisions are magnified. This does not, however, mean that social class has gone away as a major factor in our understanding of the consequences of de-industrialisation, rather that social class identities and collective organisation are much harder to forge because of it.

The chapter is organised in the following way. To aid the reader’s understanding of the impact of de-industrialisation in the area, which provides the context for this study, the first section provides an empirical narrative about the rise and decline of the coal and steel making communities. After that, the lens is widened to clarify the

background to the neoliberal project and its consequences for class, communities and women, which is explained through the wider sociological literature on changing social class relations and composition.

### **The coal and steel industries in County Durham**

The geographical communities in North East England where this research was conducted are the former coalfield area of East and North West Durham and a former steel town in North West Durham. These were once thriving, working class communities that were dependent on the coal and steel industries for their livelihoods until the 1980s. Fowler et al. (2001, pp.120-135) argue that “communities were created around these industries and became dependent on them”. These industries had always been subject to the turbulence of global markets but not to closure and wholesale job loss.

In 1947 the East Durham coalfield was nationalised and in 1967 the steel industry in Consett was also nationalised (Beynon et al., 1991.p.xv). During the post-war period, the Ministry of Fuel and Power’s employment policies called for coal and steel output to be maximised. The politicians argued successfully that, in order to achieve this, no new male employing manufacturing industries should be introduced into these coal and steel working areas. New industries would, they believed, attract miners and steel workers to take up alternative employment and this would reduce coal and steel output. This policy left communities dependent on these two heavy industries and bereft of alternative work when de-industrialisation of the nationalised industries took place in the 1980s (Beynon et al., 1991, pp.102-106).

The National Coal Board’s (NCB) ‘Coal News’ (1965) quoted that Lord Robins, Head of the NCB, in 1960, had claimed there was enough coal under the North Sea (550 million tonnes) to guarantee a future for North East coastal mines for the next

100 years (Beynon et al., 1991, p.44). Despite this claim, throughout the 1960s, fifty thousand jobs were lost in the Durham coalfield when imported oil and nuclear power began to replace coal for electricity generation (Beynon et al., 1991, p.106). This was the beginning of making coalminers dispensable, as nuclear power was seen as overtaking coal as a source of clean energy. By 1974 the future of the East Durham coalfield looked very promising as, through the “Plan for Coal” strategy, these coal mines were now guaranteed a secure future supplying coal to a new British Steel Plant on Teesside (Beynon et al., 1991, pp.3-4). A coherent regional economy between the coal and steel industries was established but being so reliant on supplying coal to the steel industry proved fatal for the East Durham coalfield (Beynon et al., 1991, p.4). Beynon explained that by 1979 the Teesside steel plant was importing 25% of its coal from Australia rather than using coal from the East Durham coalfield. Despite transport costs, Australian coal was cheaper. In addition, the Consett steel plant was closed in 1980 due to re-structuring within the steel industry. These changes caused a downturn in coal production in the East Durham coalfields. Due to this downturn, from 1981 to 1984 six mines were closed at Blackhall, Houghton, Boldon, Marley Hill, South and East Hetton.

The Miners’ Strike of 1984-1985 was over the decision by the National Coal Board to reduce production in its deep mines by 4 million tonnes, which would cut jobs and undermine communities. The Thatcher Government (1979) believed that the National Union of Mineworkers (N.U.M) had been the cause of Heath’s general election defeat in 1974, which brought the Labour Party back into power. Thatcher’s Government (1979) was different from conservative governments of the past due to its embracing of a more distinctive brand of neoliberal ideology. An aspect of this ideology was about breaking the power of the trade unions, which they saw as holding industry to account on working conditions and wages.

The miners’ defeat in March 1985 was claimed as a victory for Thatcher’s Government as it not only seriously wounded the N.U.M. but also weakened the wider trade union movement. According to Buckley (2015, p.422), developments in

policing and the use of criminal law against miners was so effective that the Trades Union Congress (1985) claimed it created a situation that “not one trade union dispute since 1979 could possibly have succeeded under the guise or code of conduct that the Tory government placed upon us”. Buckley (2015, p.423) argues that since this time civil liberties have been under threat and that “the defeat of what was representatively the personification of strong trade unionism was enough to ensure that industrial trade unionism was rendered impotent after 1985”.

The Miners’ Strike was not about wages but about retaining jobs and keeping collieries open, largely in communities that were dependent on these industries. When the miners returned to work after the disastrous upheaval of the strike they were, nevertheless, shocked at the announcement of a series of colliery closures that included Horden and Easington collieries. Despite earlier predictions by Lord Robins (1960) of vast reserves of coal to be mined over the next 100 years, it was announced on their return from the Miners’ Strike that only five years of coal reserves remained. The reason given by the NCB for these closures was based on the exhaustion of coal and that the deep mines were no longer cost effective as coal could be purchased more cheaply on the global market (Beynon et al., 1986a, pp.43-51). More collieries proceeded to close across Durham with a further 50,000 miners’ jobs lost to the industry (Beynon et al., 1991, p.3).

During the time of the Miners’ Strike (1984-85) the British Coal Industry focused on establishing private opencast mining companies in County Durham to produce coals that would substitute for the deep mined coal throughout the strike. This created animosity between striking miners, their union, and private companies as opencast sites experienced increased picketing from those on strike who saw their jobs being replaced by a different and cheaper form of mining (Beynon et al., 1986b, pp.53-54). This new form of production was to cause rural devastation and an “environmentally damaging impact” on local communities. Despite this, planning permission for opencast sites was continually approved (Beynon et al., 1990, p.108).

As deep mining declined, opencast was a way of producing cheaper coal, and this industry became increasingly privatised, for the accumulation of capital, and precarious, with non-unionised jobs. According to Beynon et al. (1990, p.106) “opencast sites are of relatively short duration...it is a pattern of short-term mining, therefore, with a less sustained relationship with the community and it employs very few local people”. At the time of writing this chapter (2017) there are no deep mines left in County Durham, or indeed the UK, with the last closing its doors at Kellingley, Yorkshire, in 2015 (BBC, March 2016). Open cast mining has not been the success nationally or in County Durham (where a couple of sites remain) that it was expected to be, due to public opposition. Communities are much more environmentally aware of the pollution, noise, heavy traffic and disruption this business brings to their communities, including health related problems. In addition, the scarring on the landscape requires restoration over many years.

Thanks to post war employment policies, that no alternative male employing industries be established in these geographical areas, no alternative work was available to redundant men unless they sold their labour to the private companies of opencast coal production which had partially contributed to the demise of deep mining. Coal may have been the heritage of these communities but it certainly was not their future. The old saying of “we can always find work at the pit” was no longer true (Beynon et al., 1991, p.102).

### **The steel industry**

The steel town where this research took place had been a typical ‘one company’ town that depended on the steel works for its livelihood. The steel works had been “central to social, cultural and political life” (Kearney, 1990, p.69). According to Robinson and Sadler (1985, p.109)



It was a town of some 25,000 people, was a classic company town, economically, socially and physically dominated by the steel works...with households who lived around the routine of shift work.

The steel company that had been founded in 1840 as deposits of local iron were discovered, by 1880 began to import iron ore in preference to the low-grade local ore. The steel company in North West Durham gradually became dependent upon high quality, imported foreign iron ore from Australia and “was among the largest in Britain producing 10% of national steel output” (Robinson and Sadler, 1985, pp.111-112). Unfortunately, it was very expensive to transport imported iron ore to inland sites.

The nationalisation of the company in 1967 to form part of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) was the ‘beginning of the end’ for the steel works. BSC was committed to a strategy of 5 large integrated iron and steel plants on the coast, which ultimately left no room for inland operations. Producing iron and steel at inland sites such as the steel works in North West Durham became uneconomical for the company. Closure of the plant took place in 1980, despite an anti-closure campaign that emphasised that not only was the organisation in profit, but that production was important for the way of life of the community. However, there had been macro forces at play since 1967 when the company was nationalised (Robinson and Sadler, 1985, p.112).

At the time of closure, the town had a 12% unemployment rate with three quarters of its people being employed at the plant or in industries directly dependent on the plant; 3,500 jobs were lost from the plant. Between 1978 and 1981, 9,560 jobs had been lost to the town and its surrounding area as the wider economy also collapsed (Kearney, 1990, p.91). At this time 2,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in this district, which contributed to male unemployment rising to 30% by 1981 (Robinson and Sadler, 1985, pp.112-115). 80% of young people between 16 and 19 were either unemployed or on a government training scheme (Kearney, 1990, p.85).

The area was now in a massive economic crisis and had a large reserve of unemployed labour. A re-industrialisation strategy attempted to provide 6,000 jobs within 5 years for more than 9,000 unemployed people. This strategy, implemented in response to the economic crisis, did little to provide ex-steelworkers with work as it was based on flexibilisation policies. Small businesses were brought into the area, looking for cheap factory labour, and offered flexible working practices with insecure, short-term, lower waged, non-unionised work. The strategy also encouraged entrepreneurship by offering ex-steel workers enterprise allowance funding to establish a small business with a view to future job creation. The government was encouraging ex-workers to move on from their economic past and reduce their reliance on the state by becoming a “Schumpeter’s entrepreneur”, an individual who is an agent of change, who is his own boss and lives with risk, introduces new methods of production and opens up new markets (Schumpeter 1949). According to Beynon et al., (1991, p.109) “the British Steel Corporation had stated that the re-industrialisation of these old state managed lands that had been laid to waste would be revitalised through individual entrepreneurship”.

Few ex-steel workers complied with the offer of insecure work or becoming an entrepreneur. There was too much at risk in taking insecure work that did not offer a living wage. Unskilled manual work in the steel industry had little relevance to running a business. According to Hudson (1989, p.329), self-employment was not a solution to the crisis and “the actual effects in combatting unemployment were very limited”. According to Robinson and Sadler (1985, p.115):

One consequence of the inability of the reindustrialisation strategy to make much impact on unemployment in this de-industrialised area resulted in the increasing intervention of Manpower Services Commission.

There was a massive growth in welfare to work programmes such as the Community Programme and Youth Training Schemes that were a stopgap measure and a relatively cheap way of providing services for social inclusion. The interventions

claimed to offer a lifeline for redundant men to retain a routine and learn new skills; however, the labour market never delivered meaningful work with a living wage. According to Kearney (1990, p.91) training programmes were:

Central government's way of socially controlling the unemployed by restructuring the community through artificially creating new social hierarchies of agencies prepared to accept MSC money but always on MSC terms.

Furthermore, Robinson and Sadler (1985, p.116) argue, such provision was inadequate in meeting the needs of these de-industrialised areas as it:

Hindered the development of greater political awareness of the situation...of why Consett was part of a broader drive to reduce the state sector and thereby diminish the power of organised labour.

It is on this note that the chapter now connects this struggle with a wider analysis of the project of neoliberalism and its impact on social class and gender relationships in particular.

### **De-industrialisation: the neoliberal turn**

De-industrialisation is the systematic reduction in industrial capacity in formerly industrially developed areas that results in the loss of jobs in traditional industries such as coalmining and iron and steel. According to Bluestone and Harrison (1982, p.6) "it is a widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation's productive capacity". North East England was the first industrial region in the first industrial nation, and it was the first region to experience massive de-industrialisation. It experienced the social trauma of that change from the late 1970s (Robinson, 2002, p.319). What was to happen in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a complex political and economic affair that had devastating social consequences for working class communities. Our understanding of this process has to be set against the backdrop of neoliberalism as an economic and political project of reshaping the social relations of class.

Milton Friedman, possibly the most influential neoliberal economist on developments in the UK in the 1980s, emphasised “market solutions to social problems in place of a government Welfare State” (Stedman-Jones, 2012, p.122). Friedman failed to recognise the destructive force of capitalism on society if the market failed and there was a need for a social safety net. Friedman’s neoliberalism was that markets would regulate themselves in times of depression and should be left to do so despite the social cost to society.

Harvey (2005, p.2) rightly points out that neoliberalism is more than a set of economic ideas in that it is also a political project:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit.

In the literature, the term ‘post-Fordism’ seeks to capture the impact of neoliberal de-industrialisation on the organisation of capital. “Flexible specialization” involved introducing small batch production that required skilled workers to use manufacturing technologies in small businesses (Amin, 1994, pp.13-16). These new jobs required an entirely new range of skills from those that were required in the traditional industries of coal and steel. Many men made redundant in the area were

either unskilled manual workers or possessed skills that were largely non-transferable and in the new industrial climate they became surplus to requirement. The new jobs attracted women and brought about an increasing feminisation of the workplace. In addition, it could be argued that this role reversal, when women out of financial necessity left their domestic roles to become the main (if meagre) breadwinners, brought progress in achieving some equality for women in the workplace, and at home a degree of financial independence. However, when families experience poverty through de-industrialisation it is because they are exploited through precarious, flexible, low paid work.

According to Harvey (2005, p.53), in order to survive “it was not hard to integrate neo-liberal values into common sense”. An increasingly precarious flexible labour market, with flexible working practices in the service industries, also replaced the traditional industries. This power imbalance gave capitalists the upper hand in creating an insecure economy that offered short-term work, thus increasing job insecurity, and paying lower wages with no union protection that increased anxiety amongst the working age population.

Neoliberalism reformed the welfare state in favour of a workfare state by redefining the responsibility of citizens to look after themselves whilst, at the same time, de-industrialisation and an insecure economy made this task more difficult to achieve. A workfare state is characterised by a lack of protection for its unemployed and vulnerable citizens as its focus is to reduce social expenditure through welfare reform and enforce strict conditions for welfare claimants to discourage them from claiming or being dependent on benefits. According to Simmons (2011) the Welfare Reform Bill 2011:

Provides for a new, tougher conditionality regime for benefit claimants. This reflects the growing political consensus in recent years, that work is the best route out of poverty, and that the benefit system should encourage claimants into work via enhanced ‘personalised conditionality’ – i.e., directed mandatory activity to prepare for and obtain work. Ending what has been regularly described as the ‘something for nothing’ culture of the benefit

system is perceived to be a popular message to impart to the public and the media.

Welfare claimants must adhere to the strict conditional requirements of the state and are subject to surveillance through electronic systems along with intervention strategies that seek to bring about a change in attitude in claimants. This approach reinforces feelings of failure in claimants, especially in areas where few jobs exist. According to Friedli and Stern (2015, p.42):

Coercive methods through psychological interventions aim to modify cognitive function or emotional disposition of welfare claimants despite the paradox of market failure to provide work.

Wacquant (2008, p.268) also makes the point that a workfare state enforces people to work in “insecure and flexible jobs for substandard wages”, whereas Bambra 2011 (cited in Schrecker and Bambra, 2015, pp. 13-16; p.46.) points to the social policy implications:

Transformations of the labour markets, patterns of deindustrialisation and the expansion of the precariat as the outcome of conscious decisions to pursue neoliberal agendas (p.46)...the privatization of state enterprise and welfare services and the deregulation of the private sector. The promotion of labour market flexibility, supply side economics, the subordination of social policy to the demands of the market and minimising public expenditure (pp.13-16)...these are accompanied by the abandonment of the pursuit of full employment that was once a pillar of political and economic policy, especially until 1979. The monetarist pursuit of low inflation by the Thatcher government accepted high unemployment and its social consequence of collateral damage as the price to pay (p.46).

In restructuring the economy and the state in this way neoliberalism has also restructured social class relations and experiences, which we now explore.

## **Social trauma**

According to Bluestone and Harrison (1982, p.81) “the immediate effects of job loss and declining living standards, also had broader sociological impacts on community identity, public services and physical and mental well-being”. Social trauma in this chapter is seen as an economic blow to a community that the area has never recovered from. The shock of this economic blow remains in people’s psyche as well as in their austere living and working conditions that have deteriorated even further over time.

Mah (2010, pp.398-413) recognises that de-industrialisation is an ongoing process rather than a one off economic disaster. She points to the fact that de-industrialisation resides in the living memory of those who experienced this late twentieth century phenomenon. It is also present in other generations, through the inter-generational recounting of experiences, and so there is no closure with the past. De-industrialisation is an ongoing process through what she calls, “industrial ruination as a lived process” (Mah,2010, p.399) This is where people remain living in close proximity to de-industrialised sites, it is part of their visual environment that continually reminds them of the past. She defines “industrial ruins as produced by capital abandonment of sites of industrial production” (Mah,2010, p.399). Often these sites became derelict and remain visible thus keeping the memory of an industrial past still alive.

Bright (2010, p.47) explains that young men who remain living in former mining communities have also been traumatised by the social and economic history of the Miners’ Strike between 1984 and 1985. This strike lives on in the living memory of young men, who he refers to as “ghosted bodies”, as the past of their area has deprived them of work and so they have no hope of a future. Moving forward in these communities has not been easy to do as memories live on and neoliberal policies have extended unemployment rather than ended it. Linkon (2013, p.39) also sees memories as important for what the “past means in the present”. She recognises

that long after the event younger generations have also become long-term unemployed, with many experiencing poor mental health due to the lack of work. Linkon (2013, p.39) explains, de-industrialisation “has a half-life” as people continue to struggle with the social and economic consequences within their personal lives and communities. According to Linkon (2013, p.39):

If we are to understand the long-term legacy of de-industrialisation, what we might think as the half-life of de-industrialisation, we must take their representations seriously, not for what they show us about the past but for what they reveal about what the past means in the present.

Walkerdine (2010) also focuses on how affective communal relationships were provided through the routine of work, a gendered organisation of work, and kinship practices of in-kind transactions. According to Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012), such social practices provided “psychosocial mutual support” and “ontological security that provided a stable mental state derived from a sense of continuity in regards to the events of one’s life” (p.47). Such affective communal relationships had been formed over many generations and provided a sense of a “containing skin” that held anxieties at bay and kept these communities together in times of instability in industrial production. De-industrialisation ruptured the “containing skin” that contained these anxieties causing “trauma” to individuals and the collective body of the community (pp.51-54).

According to Erikson (1994, p. 228) (as cited in Walkerdine 2010, p.109):

Trauma is generally taken to mean a blow to the tissues of the body – or more frequently now, to the structures of the mind – that results in injury or some other disturbance.

Erikson adds that:

One can speak of traumatized communities as something distinct from assemblages of traumatized persons. Sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the mind and body . . . but even if that does not happen, traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture almost – that is



different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up (1994, p.231).

Most importantly, he argues that a “collective trauma...damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (1994, p.233).

The trauma of de-industrialisation has produced long lasting effects not just in the minds of redundant coal and steel workers but also in the minds of future generations who have inherited living memories of this loss. This left men, in particular, in psychological deficit and changed the role of women from that of unpaid domestic labour to working for meagre wages in poor quality jobs. Nostalgic memories live on for community life and kinship, and the routine of work that gave pride, value and respect to the lives of industrial workers and their families. This is despite the difficulties that hardship and dangerous work had on family life. To be nostalgic about the past is better than a life of anxiety with no work, or low waged work, or welfare, and living on the abandoned wastelands that have yet to be transformed. According to Linkon (2013, pp.51-52) “the historical event of de-industrialisation matters today not only because of what happened when plants closed but also because it continues to affect people and places”.

### **‘All that is solid...’**

Bauman (2000, p.2) uses the metaphor of “liquidity” to describe the nature of the present time as “liquid modernity”: when the solids of “heavy modernity”, when capital and labour were dependent upon each other for wealth creation with trade unions central to working class living standards, have melted. The solids of “heavy modernity” cannot be returned to their former state as they have been dissolved through neoliberal policies that brought about a separation between capital and labour; liquid modernity is a time where everything is fluid and forever changing shape.

One way in which sociological analysis has attempted to capture the transformations of the current era is through the notion of individualisation. This idea must be distinguished from the “individualism”, which is seen as part of Thatcher’s neoliberal ideology, that encouraged self-interest in individuals (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002, p.202). According to Bauman (2000, pp.31-32) “individualization” consists of transforming human “identity” from a “given” into a “task” and charging individuals with the responsibility for performing that task, and for the consequences of their performance. In other words, it means in the establishment of ‘de-jure’ autonomy’ (by right according to the law) by which individuals have been given the freedom to shape their own identity but not in circumstances of their own choosing. However, ‘de facto’ tells us that in reality this may not occur as structures of inequality limit choice and opportunity. Human beings have to experience the complexity that they are no longer ‘born into’ their identities as in the past but must construct an identity with few resources and opportunities to do this. According to Bauman (2000, p.34) “Individualization is a fate, not a choice”.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p.202) see “individualization” in more positive terms as freeing people from their inherited roles:

Individualization is a concept which describes a structural, sociological transformation of social institutions and the relationship of the individual to society. Individualization liberates people from traditional roles and constraints...individuals are removed from status-based classes. Social classes have been detraditionalized. Individualization...not just how people deal with these transformations in terms of their identity and consciousness, but also how their life situations and biographical patterns are changed.

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, pp.202-203) the detraditionalizing of social class can be seen through changes in:

Family structures, housing conditions, leisure activities, geographical distribution of populations, trade union and club membership, voting patterns etc. Secondly, women are cut loose from their ‘status fate’ of compulsory housework and support by a husband. Industrial society has been dependent upon the unequal positions of men and women, but modernity does not hesitate at the front door of family life. The entire structure of family ties has

come under pressure from individualization and a new negotiated provisional family composed of multiple relationships...a 'post-family' is emerging. Thirdly, the old forms of work routine and discipline are in decline with the emergence of flexible work hours, pluralized underemployment and the decentralization of work sites...The individual is removed from traditional commitments and support relationships, but exchanges them for the constraints of existence in the labour market.

Arguably, Bauman (2000, pp.33-34) is more critical of this process in that he suggests "individualization" involves "dis-embedding" without "re-embedding" and being in this latter place is one where anxiety and insecurity reside. "Dis-embedding" means disrupting what already exists such as traditional ways of working and living, and replacing it with new ways of working and living. For some people this might have been an opportunity, for others less fortunate this would not be the case. There was no going back to the time of "heavy modernity", hence no "re-embedding", in a time of liquid modernity where nothing was solid but everything was forever changing.

As such, to secure an identity is almost like playing "musical chairs...as men and women are constantly on the move and promised no fulfilment, no rest, and no satisfaction of arriving, of reaching a final destination...there is no prospect of re-embedding at the end of the road taken by (now chronically) dis-embedded individuals" (Bauman, 2000, p.33-34). On the other hand, "dis-embedded individualization" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.203) is seen as liberation as there is a decline in social class and status groups. "Dis-embedded individuals" have been given the power and authority to take control of their lives and identity making. The individual, not their class, becomes the unit of social reproduction. Individuals are therefore handed greater responsibility due to the privatisation of decision-making processes in developing one's own biography. At the same time as this 'liberation' of 'dis-embedding' occurs, 're-embedding', as new forms of reintegration and control, also occurs:

The liberated individual becomes dependent upon the labour market and because of that, dependent on, for example, education, consumption, welfare state regulations and support; possibilities and fashions in medical, psychological and pedagogical care. Dependency upon the market extends into every area of life. The individual is removed from traditional

commitments and support relationships, but exchanges them for the constraints of existence in the labour market. In spite of these new forms of constraint, individualized cultures foster a belief in individual control — a desire for a ‘life of one's own’.

(Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.203)

The much more positive and liberating view of individualisation offered above does not fit very well with the experiences of people living in communities experiencing de-industrialisation albeit there are elements of change, in some unintended ways, which this depiction captures. ‘Embedded individualization’ recognises the shift to what was once the collective concerns of individuals, now transformed and reduced to a private individual level. In times of heavy modernity, individuals brought their individual work related problems to the trade unions so they became collective concerns to be negotiated on their behalf by the unions. The decline of trade unions means there is no longer an interface, in many cases, between the individual and employer where problems are addressed collectively.

This shift from a collective approach leaves individuals in isolation and having to take individual responsibility for their own problems when making decisions and choices in everyday life. Individuals are freed from collective support while at the same time experiencing increased responsibility, due to the privatisation of individual problems that were previously dealt with collectively. According to Bauman (2008, p.88) “modern society and its ideology of privatization thus privatizes previous collective concerns or fears to a private level”. Individualisation commits individuals to take responsibility for themselves but fails to give them the power to do so effectively.

In privatising individual problems in the name of freedom the result has been uncertainty and insecurity. It has increased individual responsibility to act, especially in constructing an identity which may not turn out in one’s favour, but one must

suffer the consequences of this in isolation. Bauman (2000, p.218) refers to this as providing an unfair “redistribution of freedoms” where freedom depends upon one’s monetary resources, especially around what goods to purchase. Those unable to choose the right goods are seen as “flawed customers as those who fail to [become a consumer] have only themselves to blame while being an easy target for other people’s contempt and condemnation” (Bauman, 1998, p.38-39).

‘Embedded individualisation’ is the condition that neoliberal policies have created in increasing individual responsibility in structural conditions which limit their choices. Collective problems have now become private troubles in which individuals have to create a new identity for themselves. Without the routine of work, and with no collective allegiances, this freedom is deceptive because people with few resources and even fewer opportunities are simply churned through welfare to work schemes and short-term poor quality work.

### **Social class and identity**

“Class is the principal determining factor of social identity” (Marx, cited in Bauman, 2004a, p.40). It had been thought that the social class which one had inherited and to which one belonged would provide a lasting legacy of one’s identity. However, this particular version of social class primarily focussed on class as determined by a person’s relationship to production. This narrow view of class has been challenged by a number of authors. For example, Heath et al., (2009, p.22), in their study of “decline of class as a social identity”, made four distinct claims:

- (1) Social class no longer provides a basis of social identity as it once did.
- (2) Collective class identities have reduced force and are less influential for social action.
- (3) People have been given the responsibility to choose their own life worlds and biographies, as social identities are no longer inherited in the way they once were. Therefore, class identity is now related more weakly to one’s social class origins than it once was.
- (4)

One's current occupational position will be more weakly related to class identity despite the 'objective' position of class location.

The opening up of class to more nuanced analysis was also proposed by Bourdieu (1986), who introduces an understanding of social class based on the interaction of economic, social and cultural 'capital' through different social spaces where it is accumulated or lost, distributed or traded by individuals within a particular social field (Skeggs 1997, p. 8). Bourdieu's perspective on class, incorporated his concepts of capitals, habitus and social field (Sayer 2010, p,173). People with the same volume of economic capital will differ in class position if they have different amounts of cultural capital. An individuals' class position is based on the amount and composition of different capitals – primarily economic, cultural and social. Through living within particular locations within the social field (a network of class positions interacting in relation to each other) people develop a structure of dispositions (habitus) that is attuned to that context, and which tends to shape their values and attitudes in relation to others.

Sayer (2002, p.2) points out that class raises issues of the relative worth of individuals, and about differences between how people are "valued economically, and how they are valued ethically". Morality is not merely a set of norms regarding what is acceptable; it is about something independent of itself - namely, how people as inherently social beings can both harm and be harmed, flourish and suffer, can live together in ways that have regard for their well-being or not (Sayer 2010 p. 166-167). Class matters as it is how individuals of different social classes, with different levels of capital, behave towards each other in the 'social field' that can create "unequal possibilities for flourishing and suffering" (Sayer, 2005, p.218 book).

Thus, one of the most important features of class inequalities is that they present people with unequal bases for respect, not just by being objects of unwarranted respect or disdain, but as having unequal access to the practices and goods that allow

them due respect or conditional recognition. Being able to participate in practices and such relationships and gain their internal goods (development of skills and achievement) if one so wishes is crucial for well-being, though access to them differs radically across the key social divisions of gender, class and ‘race’ and across other divisions too (Sayer 2005, p.955).

The hierarchy of respect and recognition involves intersecting social divisions which social class is a significant aspect of and which are complicated by extensive gradations of class. Savage’s (2015) Great British Class Survey (GBCS), drawing on Bourdieu’s framing of social class in social, cultural and economic terms, has produced a new model of social class which comprises seven classes. In producing this model Savage used a quantitative approach through “latent class analysis”, using an online questionnaire which asked individuals to identify their class position. The survey produces seven classes which are categorised in occupational and economic terms with the “two most differentiated classes are the “elite” and the “precariat”, which score the highest and lowest on the measures of the three capitals” (Savage 2015, pp.170-171). I return to the subject of the precariat below.

What these recent debates add to our understanding is that social class is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that interacts with other social divisions in different ways which position people not only economically but socially, culturally and morally. Collectively these writers also, in different ways, reassert the importance of social class in people’s experiences, a perspective which had been questioned. For example, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p.203) have argued that the “dynamism of the labour market backed up by the welfare state has dissolved the social classes within capitalism”. Dismissing social class as a “zombie category” (p.51), in the context of individualisation, Beck and Beck Gersheim (2002, p.6) contend that class categories can only be worked out:

On an objective income basis or on structures of work and employment. You can’t relate them to how people live and think, eat, how they dress, love, organize their lives and so on.

This position was challenged by Skeggs (1997, 2005), Reay (2006) and Walkerdine (2003) who emphasise that the concept of social class is a relationship of power and opportunity, and of exploitation and control, despite being weakened as a social identity and a basis for collective organisation and social action.

Class is a major feature of subjectivity, a historical specificity and part of a struggle over access to resources and ways of being. Class not only informs subjectivity, but also how it is central to us all, even if we do not feel impeded by it or choose not to recognise it...to make class invisible is to abdicate responsibility (through privilege) from the effects it produces. To think that class does not matter is only a prerogative of those unaffected by the deprivations and exclusions it produces.

(Skeggs, 1997, p.7)

According to Skeggs (1997, p.4), “by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the working class had become a knowable, measurable and organisable category”. Historically positioning the working class, and representing them as having little value through the prism of middle class values has “pathologized” the working class as different thus “lacking respect” (Skeggs, 1997, p.1). The desire for respectability by the working class is not just a historical memory but is part of their class struggle and is alive today.

Work was traditionally a way of allocating status and roles for men whereas community and family structured working class respectability for women. One effect of de-industrialisation was a loss of these forms of respectability, most overtly for men but also for women. Being socially positioned in this way through the historical construct of class, but also through de-industrialisation, the working class has been reconfigured into the “precariat who are the insecure fringes of the new proletariat” (Wacquant, 2008, p.246).



These social and economic changes have shaped how people act and react in new circumstances and social relationships which impacts on identity. As Skeggs puts it (1997, p.94):

Identities are not reflections of objective social positions which is often how class is theorized...identities are continually in the process of being reproduced as responses to social positions, through access to representational systems and in the conversions of forms of capital...for the white working class...capital is limited and is difficult to trade with it on a market in which symbolic legitimation has occurred.

Changed social positions can be reformulated into new “subject positions” (Skeggs, 1997, p.12). Discourses of disrespect, particularly in relation to people claiming welfare benefits, are central in devaluing and demoralising people. This discourse casts them into new subject positions they have little control over. Being working class, according to Skeggs (1997), still remains a means of social differentiation which is produced by the middle classes; “the middle classes have always reproduced hierarchies and evaluations to regulate, devalue and de-legitimize the working class”. This position is supported by Reay (1997, p.263) who contends that “the working class rarely choose the discourses within which they position themselves. They are produced by the more powerful in society”.

Repeated representation and judgement of the working classes attaches negative value to them and lowers any importance of the working class to something that is insignificant, “a diminution in value” (Skeggs, 2009, pp.38-39). Judgements of taste and lifestyle are also powerful ways of classifying and separating off the working class from the middle classes. Bourdieu (1986, p.511) sees judgements of taste and classification as acts of symbolic violence:

If there is any terrorism it is in the peremptory verdicts which, in the name of taste, condemn to ridicule, indignity, shame and silence...men and women who simply fall short, in the eyes of their judges, of the right way of being and doing.

Skeggs (2009, pp.36-44) points out that inequalities associated with socio-economic difference based on class have not disappeared. Walkerdine (2003, p.237) also suggests that the importance of keeping class on the agenda is important in preventing those experiencing inequality from being judged by others.

To summarise, being working class is primarily about how subject positions are produced through a class-ridden discourse that prevents the working class from being recognised as respectable. This negative representation of them also prevents them from capitalising on the cultural capital they may have and blocks the production of a meaningful identity for material gain. This increases the socio-economic inequalities that they experience in their lives. Being working class is about inequality and exploitation, and living on a daily basis with the ‘classed gaze’ of moral judgement and subjectification of the political elite, media and middle classes. Working class people internalise and feel this negative representation of themselves. Class is lived and reproduced at an intimate level as a “structure of feeling” (Williams cited in Skeggs 1997, p.95) in which doubt, anxiety and fear inform the production of subjectivity. Class is much more than an objective relation to the world of work although this is highly significant. It is also subjectively built, and traditional patterns of work enabled both men and women to generate a narrative which valued and shaped their identities on their own terms. De-industrialisation changed this rapidly.

Next, the focus is on how the precariat are churned through the welfare to work system and consequently find themselves supplying a flexible labour market that offers nothing for career progression and no way out of poverty. The precariat, as welfare claimants, must adhere to the strict conditional requirements of welfare to work and are, as we shall see, intensely surveilled through government electronic systems.

## **The precariat, churning and surveillance**

Standing (2011, p.7) sees neoliberalism creating a “precariat” who are a “class in the making”. He argues that the “precariat” includes the working class poor and those with insecure employment, but there are other class categories that can be found within the “precariat”, such as those who do not comply with either capital or the state:

...enter the precariat, a new phenomenon even if it had shades of the past...it was not part of the working class...that suggests a society consisting mostly of workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionisation and collective agreements...the precariat are individuals who have insecure employment and jobs of only a limited duration with minimal labour protection and no sense of a secure occupational identity. Their lives are defined by short-termism and insecurity which could evolve into a mass incapacity to think long term, induced by the low probability of personal progress or building a career or social mobility...the precariat lives with anxiety...are insecure in the mind and stressed, at the same time underemployed...they hover between deeper self-exploitation and disengagement.

(Standing 2011, pp.12-14)

The reconfiguration of the workplace and of the working class to become the ‘precariat’ with the freedom to choose their identity has for many been an illusion. ‘Freedom’ reconfigures the precariat into a commodity to be bought, as an object rather than as an active subject, which is free to choose and construct its identity. Many working class people have found themselves in circumstances not of their own choosing and have little agency by which to undertake this task of constructing an identity. For most their identity is constantly in the making:

The free individual of today is a, ‘Protean Man’ who is a person who is under- socialized as he has nothing forthcoming from the world out there and has no assigned or inherited identity. To cope with the social pressures of life their identity must be continually negotiated, constructed, adjusted, and will never be complete but always evolving.

(Lifton cited in Bauman, 1988, p.41)

Failure of people to recycle themselves in finding a new identity may result in being assigned a stigmatised identity, bequeathed by politicians, the media and others. According to Doogan (2009, p.214), “to understand new capitalism, at the end of the day, is to understand an ideological offensive, a mode of domination, as Bourdieu suggests, that seeks to create uncertainty and anxiety and fear on the side of labour in order to guarantee its compliance”.

Churning is where welfare claimants actively seeking work “move in and out of low-paid, short-term jobs, and on and off benefits” (Shildrick, 2015, p.7). Welfare claimants have become a pool of cheap labour to be called upon to feed the market when it dictates, and to be disposed of when no longer required. Churning through poor quality work creates a precarious existence, a life of poverty, poor mental health and no way out of the recycling process. The lives of welfare claimants experiencing ‘churning’ are out of their control as their freedom has not provided them with an identity but mostly exclusion and anxiety.

According to Bauman (2004b, pp.40-41):

This production of human waste or ‘wasted humans’ – humans who are no longer necessary for the completion of the economic cycle and thus impossible to accommodate within a social framework resonant with the capitalist economy.

Friedli and Stern (2015, p.40) show that the ‘churned’ are subject to coercive methods through psychological interventions that will bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes to achieve employability despite labour market failure:

Eligibility for welfare benefits in neoliberal societies is dependent on unemployed and underemployed people, carrying out job search, training for work and work preparation activities as well as mandatory unpaid labour known as workfare...increasingly these activities include psychological interventions to modify attitudes, beliefs and personality through the imposition of positive affect.

Barratt (cited in Danson et al 2015, p.286) notes that the neoliberal state, in seeking to promote the freedom of individuals to determine their own fate but lacking the resources to do so, ensure they are surveilled while being 'churned' through welfare to work schemes:

This freedom to act is regulated by an array of government forces including think tank intellectuals and jobcentre and Department for Works and Pensions managers who monitor and scrutinize his or her conduct on a daily basis.

The 'churned' are 'unfree' as they are socially controlled in a confined space under the auspices of the welfare to work scheme in a strict panopticon environment to discipline their behaviour in particular ways. Bentham (1875) used the principle of the panopticon in the workhouses, and made it into a disciplinary programme of work where poor people were subjected to learning the appropriate conduct to improve themselves in order to become willing workers (Foucault 1977, pp. 200-206).

The panopticon:

Is a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals...the panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men [and women]...and for analysing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them...it functions as a kind of laboratory of power.

(Foucault, 1977, pp.203-204)

The panopticon is not concerned with what the 'unfree' think, only that they take the right action. The unfree in the panopticon are "not asked if what they are doing they were doing willingly...providing they do it" (Bauman, 1988, p.12).

Workfare has a history, of course. The poor of the 19<sup>th</sup> century found themselves victims of unemployment and were sent to work in the workhouse for basic food and shelter, which was punishment for not working. The aim of the workhouse, in creating the illusion that people were working for waged labour when in fact they were working for subsistence, can only be described as the workfare of that time. The poor's conduct and work were strictly monitored and life was made as unpleasant as possible as they were seen as a drain on public resources. The priority was to return the poor to labour through which the industrialists could create wealth. The conditionality of these workhouses is not dissimilar to the conditionality of welfare to work programmes today, which are spaces where some of the poorest in society are to be found.

Surveillance today, however, does not rely on the same forms of overseeing as in the prison or the workhouse because the poor are monitored at a distance through electronic surveillance. According to Bauman and Lyons (2013, p.17), the power of surveillance "can move with the speed of an electronic signal...and those holding the levers of power can at any moment escape beyond reach into sheer inaccessibility". The power of surveillance is now operated across space and time. It is found across all aspects of everyday life and is now a key component of the work within government departments for surveilling the churned on welfare to work schemes.

To summarise, individualisation has brought about unfreedom and inequality in the lives of those who have been unable to construct an identity within a flexible labour market. Whilst the structural conditions of class have been made more difficult through the decomposition of the labour market, the social conditions of class identity have also been undermined, thereby making a collective class response less likely. This is strongly evident in the experience of welfare claimants who are part of the precariat, constantly churned and electronically surveilled through welfare to work schemes. In the following section the focus is on a crisis in masculinity, where men are faced with feminised work, whereas for women, their austere lives bear the brunt of the transition from industrialisation to de-industrialisation. Men now often

find themselves at home which in many cases has brought about a breakdown in marital relations and poor mental health, not just in men but also in women [See Chapter 1 Appendices 1,2&3]

### **Changing gender relationships**

Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012, p.101) point out that for men living in de-industrialised areas there is a crisis in masculinity. The changing nature of the economy, with its emphasis on service industries, and the feminisation of the workplace have been “an affront to their masculine dignity”. This also includes future male generations, as jobs are no longer passed down from father to son. According to Goode and Maskovsky (2001, pp.470-482), de-industrialisation shifts the blame from social and economic structures in forcing masculinity into new spaces and conditions.

The old traditional industrial order had once depended upon a stable gendered division of labour but the restructuring of the economy to low paid, non-unionised, precarious, feminised jobs shifted the gender balance of power within home life in the latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women took up these jobs out of financial necessity, leaving men at home. As my study will show, family life fragmented as redundant men became (self)-excluded from a workplace that did not offer masculine jobs. What followed, was often poor mental health, patriarchal oppression, alcohol and drug abuse, and divorce. This shattering of working class family life remains prevalent in the future generations of redundant industrial coal and steel workers.

McDowell (2003, p.832) argues young men find different ways to express their masculinity, sometimes leading to drug use and suicide. According to Weis (2003, p.111) “the remaking of the white working class can only be understood in relation to gendered constructions within itself and the construction of relevant others”. Weis argues that the loss of masculine jobs has placed different demands on men. Men are now called on to transform their lives from the industrial masculinity of the past of

the manual worker, and adapt to a more subordinate form of masculinity that embraces roles within a feminised workplace. They must also share in the care and domestic roles of the household. In doing so there is a “re-construction of male – female relations” that are negotiated within family life (Weiss, 2003, p.116). Where gendered relations are actually lived out in interdependence of each other there is a “settled new working class lifestyle” and it is this “repositioning which is at the heart of the remaking of the white working class” (Weiss, 2003, p.116).

Those who reject or are unable to accomplish new gender relations within family life will have “hard lives” in the harsh conditions of a restructured global economy that calls for partners to work together (Weiss, 2003, p.116). This new economy calls for those who are unskilled or with few qualifications to work unsociable hours for low pay on temporary or often zero hour contracts. For Weiss (2003, p.127) “the old industrial order rested upon a stable gender regime, it is the unsteady fulcrum of gender (roles, definition and hierarchy) that lies at the very heart of a reconstituted white working class life”. According to Broughton (2006, p.9), “changing roles in the labour market to more feminine occupations, domestic and care roles within the home, and mandatory attendance on government training programmes has an emasculating effect on men”. Despite this ‘emasculating effect’, men are called to revise their working class masculinity to one that embraces caring at home through fatherhood and in work by becoming a breadwinner. According to Linkon (2014, p.166), “emotional labour has replaced manual labour as a central feature of white working class identity, it can be productive and powerful”. But it can also result in the opposite too.

Beynon et al. (1991, p.160) argue that de-industrialisation radically changed family life as role reversal took place in the home when work disappeared for men. According to McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.166), “a new polarization between men and women was set up” which Cockburn, writing a decade previously, had recognised: that where deindustrialisation occurred “capital has actually defined the very shape of the family” (1977, p. 179). The role of women was to take on a



different dimension as de-industrialisation resulted in an increase in insecure, low paid, unskilled, non-unionised work for women and, in most cases, a subjugated domestic role in the home.

Men and women responded differently to de-industrialisation because it entailed women moving from respectable domesticity into a precarious, low paid labour market. McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.181) point out that women provided a “cheap and flexible labour force that worked for pin money”. ‘Pin money’ was an expression used when men and women worked in traditional roles and men were the primary breadwinners within the household. This was a trivial amount of money given to women by men for personal use. In this time of de-industrialisation and the changes that were taking place in family life the understanding of ‘pin money’ significantly changed. This was money earned by women in a low paid labour market to ensure there was some financial safety net around the family when men had no work. This significantly changed the role of men as the primary breadwinner of the household. Harkness et al (1994, p.1) points out that, “women’s earnings make an important contribution towards keeping families out of poverty. For couples, poverty rates would have been up to 50% higher in 1990/91 without women’s pay”. According to McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.181):

This growth in female employment grew dramatically in the region of North East England... industrial restructuring is not gender- neutral [as] replacement...[of] heavy industries by light manufacturing and service work...was a search for cheap, more docile labour. This changing division of labour as a whole implies both a changing spatial and sexual division.

Men who had depended upon the domestic role of women in the home now found their role restructured as they were no longer the breadwinner but at home in a domestic role and facing long-term unemployment. Pimlot (1981, p.51) explained that unemployed men saw redundancy as a sign of personal failure although its true cause was a crisis within capitalism that was beyond their control. Women who had stepped over the threshold of the domestic sphere into the world of work faced the challenge of managing the dual roles of work and home. Changes in behaviour became visible in family life when the separate spheres of home and work fractured

and women went to work and men stayed at home. This socio-economic change within family life became visible as conflict in women's lives. According to Seabrook (1982, pp.1-12), "limitless leisure" was not healthy for family life as "violence, marital breakdown and mental health difficulties often followed".

Kinship or communal self-help that was based on mutual support and aid formed a safety net around industrial communities. Kinship was also a form of social production as caregivers were pre-dominantly women who cared for children, the elderly and sick within the extended family and neighbourhood. Such collective ways of organising enabled communities not only to survive hardship, but kinship also provided a lifeline of emotional support and reduced anxiety within the population. According to Walkerdine (2012, p.48), kinship is more than providing food and clothing through in-kind transactions as it provides "psychosocial mutual support that is affective and social". Income that was once supplemented through kinship practices of mutual aid was replaced by meagre state welfare benefits. Aid for food and clothing was provided at the loss of one's privacy through local and central government agencies.

Kinship support networks were dismantled through the effects of de-industrialisation and so private troubles were unable to be shared. Individualisation that had dismantled collective identities and left people to resolve everyday problems in private meant in a consumer society, that women had little emotional support unless they could pay for it. According to Boykoff (2011, p.103) individualisation has "atomised" everyday life as it has "broken down natural bonds of duty and responsibility...thus disrupting ties with our neighbours". A new model where they could share their troubles meant that a new model of kinship needed to be found.

In the aftermath of economic decline and the loss of kinship, the patriarchal culture of oppression that was previously masked by a traditional masculine structure of work became more visible. This visibility was accompanied by domestic violence

and drug and alcohol addiction, which have been on the rise since austerity measures were implemented in 2010 (See Chapter 1 Appendix 2). The long-term effects of de-industrialisation on women are poor mental health and the need to rely on the welfare state and the voluntary and community sector in times of crisis. There is a need to provide women with women-only safe places in deprived areas, where they can bring their private problems to share with others in times of crisis.

Women living in post-industrial areas live austere lives with only a few, insecure, low paid economic opportunities available to keep them out of poverty. This often results in low levels of self-esteem. Such women often come from a culture of no confidence that is part of the gendered, undermining form of cultural capital endemic in these pre-and post-industrial communities, and is also a consequence of poor education. Poor education restricts the lives of women, leaving them feeling inferior and demoralised from a young age. Little consideration was given by schools to female working class pupils, who were not expected to pursue a career. Working class pupils seldom perform with the same degree of confidence as middle class children, nor do they usually share middle class aspirations, and consequently are cast aside as having no long-term investment value.

According to Reay (2009, p.23)

White working class girls agonize that they would be ‘a nothing’...in the context of schooling they inhabit a psychic economy of class defined by fear, anxiety and unease where failure looms large and success is elusive; a place where too often they see are seen and see themselves as worthless. This denial of working class value within schooling is not simply a contemporary manifestation. It has a long and damaging history dating from the inception of state schooling for all...with the intention of the dominant classes to police and control the working classes rather than educate them.

Such experiences marginalise women educationally and economically for many years to come.

According to Skeggs (2013, p.2) the exchange value of an individual is measured in monetary terms in relation to generating wealth for the economy, as well as being independent of the state. Despite the state and the capitalist elite stripping out the coal and steel industries and making tens of thousands of men redundant, these people are deemed to have little use or exchange value for the new economy. Their limited capital, their meagre cultural capital in class terms that offers either no or few low level educational qualifications, and their poor physical and mental health, due to the long term effects of de- industrialisation, prevent them from converting their capital for an economic identity with material security (see Chapter 1 Appendices 1,2&3).

This is how Skeggs (1998, p.10-11) puts it:

When cultural capital is or is not converted into symbolic capital...inequalities are generated and systematic disempowerment engendered...symbolic capital is powerful capital...it brings with it power. If one does not own cultural capital (or it is de-legitimated and taken away by the right of law) then it cannot be converted or traded as an asset; it cannot be capitalized on (p.10)...when conversion is blocked positions of inequality are maintained.

According to Skeggs (2013, p.6), such people are not recognised as a “subject of value... [which is a] self that works to accumulate its own value in its own interests...at the exclusion of others”. Those living in de-industrialised communities are not given respect as individuals. Abercrombie (cited in Skeggs 1998, p.163) points out that “individuals” are the “products of privilege, who can occupy the economic and cultural conditions which enable them to work on the self” to improve their health and wellbeing. The “subject of value” is also someone who is a “consumer” (Bauman, 1998, p.26). In a society of consumers, welfare claimants are “flawed customers” because they are the poor in our society who have no spending power, unlike the “perfect customers”, who have resources and can continue to consume and buy their way out of boredom. The consumer life of the “perfect

customers”, according to Bauman (1998, p.38), “is a happy life...a life insured against boredom...a life in which something constantly happens”. If an individual does not achieve becoming a consumer then it is the individual who is held accountable, as they are excluded not only from the consumer market but also the jobs’ market. According to Bauman (2008, p.1) “consuming more is the sole road to inclusion, but the inability to consume more is a sure recipe for exclusion”.

Individualisation that constantly demands of people that they create an identity in conditions of inequality in work and inequality in patterns of consumption has led to an “escalation of anxiety in society” (Bauman 2008, p.16). The experience of deindustrialisation seriously weakened the collective identity of the working class. A class whose main source of power was their use value in production had become surplus to requirements, undermining their capacity to act collectively, and undermining their sense of community. They have been divided through a neoliberal strategy of “turning a crisis into an opportunity”, undermining solidaristic communities through creating social divisions, and divisions between the respectable and the non-respectable based on their exchange value for the economy. There is nothing new in this, as Skeggs points out (2013, p.97):

The working class have consistently been differentially cleaved into the respectable and unrespectable, but they have always remained classified as different. They come divided between the respectable and the non-respectable based on their exchange value to work or not to work in an insecure service sector economy.

As a result, those living in de-industrialised areas have been labelled as welfare scroungers, the socially abject or the underclass. According to Tyler (2013, pp.35-38) “abject people are those whom industrial imperialism rejects...are at the sharp end of subjugation within the prevailing systems of power”. They are judged by politicians and the media as subjects who do not actively contribute to the economy but live off taxpayers’ money, a view which ignores the valuable unpaid contributions made to rebuilding the social fabric of their communities.

According to Skeggs (1998, p.3), “class and classifying produces very real effects which are lived on a daily basis”. Class is in people’s “psyche” (Khun, 1995, p.98) and is used to differentiate people, subconsciously in many cases, by their taste in clothes, cars, where they live, the furnishing in their homes, their behaviour, their language and dialect, how they manage their children, their children’s names and so on. This process of differentiation by these social markers also entails evaluative, that is ‘classed’ judgements, so that difference is used to position people as inferior or inadequate. Skeggs (1998, p.90) points out that “homes and bodies are where respectability is displayed and where class is lived out”. The middle classes have, since Victorian times, judged those who were socially different from themselves and came to classify them as working class (Skeggs, 1998, p.4). The working class are continually subjected to a negative representation of themselves by politicians, the media and the middle classes and are labelled with disrespectful names.

The economic and social processes of de-industrialisation generated insecurity as fear of the past still resonates in the present and can then be used to control behaviour. A loss of routine, previously provided through work, has resulted in increased anxiety and brought about poor mental health, in both men and women, but particularly in women that can often result in self harm (See Chapter 1 Appendices 2 &3). Poor mental health has now extended into future generations of young men and women who remain living in these communities. Once the skin of everyday routine practices broke, freedom from work was exhilarating at first, but in time men realised that they had no sense of purpose in their lives. Wray and Stephenson (2012, pp.329-336) point out that the consequences for mining communities in County Durham resulted in “depression and loss of self-worth and confidence at an individual and collective level”.

## **Conclusion**

De-industrialisation in the 1980s was accelerated by neoliberalism which gathered pace in the UK from the first Thatcher government onwards. Neoliberal governance and policies that brought about de-industrialisation and replaced traditional industries with flexible capitalism in the service sector industries has not only restructured the economy, it has also brought about significant transformations in working class communities and re-structured their way of life from one of established patterns of work routine and collective security to one of individual anxiety and communal fragmentation. What has emerged is a localised precariat who have few employment protection rights, and people who live without dignity due to the demands of the market and whose characters are corroding under the weight of uncertainty of what the future will hold.

With the demise of working class communities and collective identities, the neoliberal ideology of 'individualisation' gives individuals the 'task' of constructing their own identity as there are no longer 'given' identities through their experience of work. Failure to construct an identity is, then, the fault of the individual and not the state, which supports capitalists through its policies to provide insecure, short-term, employment opportunities. The precariat, who are not a class in their own right (the working class who had fought for protection rights were a social class in their own right), are presented with endless 'churning' experiences and surveilled through welfare to work programmes and poor quality training. This socio-economic restructuring of work and class that has brought about, to some degree, a reversal of traditional gender roles as women have entered into a feminised, flexible labour market and men have become (self) excluded, has also brought about a crisis in masculinity. A culture of anomie exists as the resulting insularity and isolation has contributed to poor mental health in these communities and which, in some circumstances, results in domestic violence and alcohol abuse in women. (See Chapter 1 Appendix 2). Powerless social groups usually bear the brunt of social change and the experience of de-industrialisation in this area is no exception. Women

have borne the brunt of de-industrialisation and are likely to live austere lives as they continue to manage family life through times of significant financial loss. The demise of their social class means that are subjected to being re-labelled and devalued by politicians and the media as abject people having no value. De-industrialisation continues to live on through the memory of the social trauma that occurred at the time when the community suffered the loss of their dignity as well as their work. It continues to live on through neo-liberal policies that prevent the restoration of working class lives through secure, meaningful work and the formation of solidaristic, collective identities which existed in the past.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Adult Education in Precarious Times**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter traces the dominant social character of public education that provided an education to the working class from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

Historically, the main purpose of educating the working class was for the economic prosperity of the country. The 21<sup>st</sup> century contemporary model of ‘employability’ is a continuation and accentuation of this pattern. In contrast to the dominant economic model of education this chapter gives recognition to alternative traditions of adult education such as the liberating, personal development, radical and social purpose models that offered those experiencing socio-economic inequalities an education related to the social reality of their lives, and enabled them, at times, to challenge and change oppressive structures.

To make social transformation possible, in educational terms, Johnson (1988, pp. 21-29) distinguished between “useful knowledge” and “really useful knowledge”. This distinction has historical roots in the tradition of radical adult education: ‘useful knowledge’ was associated with providing education which had a pragmatic value for individuals to skill them for the economy whereas ‘really useful knowledge’ was concerned with developing knowledge to help people understand their social reality and the social inequalities they were experiencing, and how they could react to change their situation for the better. In this chapter the dominance of ‘useful knowledge’ is tracked but a case is made for re-connecting with ‘really useful knowledge’. The text is organised into three main sections: section one follows the framework of Williams’ distinction between the industrial trainer, the old humanists

and the public educators. The hegemony of the latter is documented through the rise of the ‘employability trainer’. In section two the alternative traditions of public education – with a community-based focus – are introduced, and the different influences and traditions that emerged from the 1970s onwards. These have been eclipsed, of course, by the new employability trainer. In section three the precarious edge of community-based education arguably creates a space for reasserting the tradition of the public educator.

## SECTION ONE

### **The dominant tradition: from the industrial trainer to the employability facilitator**

Williams (1961) describes the educational system in the post WWII period as deriving from the time of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). Changes in the growth of industry brought about the expansion of education at elementary and secondary level and within university education “along the lines which in general we still follow today” (Williams, 1961, p.161). The expansion of education was also a product of the politics of the day that argued for an “education for all” and not just for the elite as in previous centuries. The rise of an organised working class which demanded education, the role of education in a democracy, as well as the needs of an expanding and changing economy saw the implementation of Forster’s Education Act (1870). Forster’s aim had been to put in place elementary education to guarantee economic success rather than create a liberal education that would produce critical thinkers able to contribute to a rapidly changing democratic society. Williams citing Forster states, (1961, p.162) “upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity”.

By the latter half of the 19th century the middle and upper classes recognised that they could not meet labour market shortages in an expanding economy. In order to meet this demand secondary schools selected working class boys of ability from the elementary school system to be educated for industry. It was not until the Education Act (1944), that free secondary education was made available to all. However, this system graded children, according to their learning ability, for grammar or secondary modern school with the latter focusing on preparing young people for manual labour in industry (Williams, 1961, p.170).

The expansion of educational opportunity throughout the 19th century was certainly related to class structure and educational opportunities depended upon one's class.

Williams (1961, p.164) explains:

The shadow of class thinking lies over...19<sup>th</sup> century educational thinking. The continued relegation of trade and industry to the lower social classes and the desire of successful industrialists to have their sons move in to the class of the gentry.

Williams (1961, p.162) draws attention to three distinct groups who argued over the purpose of education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and who still exist within education today. They are the public educator, the industrial trainer, and the old humanists. The public educators argued for the democratic right to an education for everyone and the responsibility of the government to provide it for the good of society. The industrial trainers wanted an educated workforce that was subjected to discipline and obedience to make industry operate effectively and for economic success. The old humanists were elitist and argued for liberal education that would develop intellectual skills and a strong sense of social responsibility in the elite. They did not think liberal education would benefit everyone, especially not the working class. Public educators sometimes collaborated with the industrial trainers who promoted education in terms of training and disciplining the poor, as workers and citizens. The old humanists were opposed to both the public educators and the industrial trainers as they saw them as a threat to liberal education. The old humanists believed that through the former, "liberal education would be vulgarized by extension to the masses...[and

through the latter] destroyed by being turned into a system of specialized and technical training” (Williams, 1961, p.162). Although education in the 19th century became a compromise between all three groups, the industrial trainer became a dominant force with the Technical Instruction Act (1889), which set out the requirement for “instruction” rather than “education” of the working class (Williams, 1961, p.163).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have seen the industrial trainer emerge as the dominant role rather than the public and liberal educator who encouraged education for loyalty and was a voice for commitment to communities and democracy. Unlike their counterparts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, who taught the working class vocational skills for industry and to be disciplined and obedient workers, the industrial trainer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become part of state coercion of the unemployed. The unemployed are caught up in the new social order of short-term capitalism and welfare reform, and are mandated to attend repetitive functional and employability skills training interventions that surveille learners and offer low-level qualifications in the name of international economic competitiveness. These programmes are no way out of poverty or welfare but a way of socially controlling the working class (Tight cited in Coffield, 1999, p.488):

The industrial trainer is also caught up within this system in the role of subordinating the unemployed to comply with a government training system and welfare requirements in panopticon training conditions where learners are ‘churned’ between government training programmes and short-term low paid work that offers no way out of poverty or welfare.

The following section describes how these neoliberal politics, policies and practices developed at a European and UK level.

### **From lifelong education to lifelong learning to lifelong employability**

Lifelong education was developed in the 1960s through the United Nations Educational Science Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and “inspired by the failure

of post-World War 2 school reforms to create a more socially just and cohesive society” (Crowther, 2003, p.1). A curriculum for lifelong education was to be concerned with the way in which education could contribute to political, economic and social life in order to create a “good society”. Lifelong education:

Stressed the importance of education arising from and contributing to people’s lives in rounded terms. This was contested terrain but one primarily influenced by a humanist ideology concerned with personal growth in an increasingly consumer culture.

(Crowther, 2003, p.1)

The UNESCO report authored by Faure (1972), *Learning to Be*, argued for the complete fulfilment of the individual, and refers to four basic assumptions for lifelong education:

- (1) The existence of an international community, and the solidarity of governments, and of people, to share the same destiny (2) a democratic approach in which each person has the right to realise their potential, and the key to this is education that is ‘thought afresh’ (3) the complete fulfilment of each individual whatever their role(s) (4) only lifelong education can produce a complete person and one must recognise that one can no longer learn once and for all but must continually learn through an evolving body of knowledge all through life which is Faure’s interpretation of ‘learn to be’.

(cited in Biesta, 2006a, p.171)

Lifelong education, as expressed above, had much in common with the idea of public education as highlighted by Williams (1961). However, the importance of lifelong learning, as distinct from lifelong education, emerged through the creation of the Single European Market in 1985. The European Union developed a series of policy papers during the 1990s which the Maastricht Treaty (1992) aided, because it enshrined in law an active role for the European Union in promoting the educational policies of member states, and therefore encouraged a common pattern to emerge (Tett cited in Crowther, 2003, p.2). The two main influences that shaped European Union policy on lifelong learning were (1) to increase economic competitiveness in the global market (2) to tackle the welfare crisis which European countries faced,

particularly at a time of pronounced stress on social cohesion through such issues as rising unemployment and migration (Crowther, 2003, p.2).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report, *Lifelong Learning for All* (1997), created a significant shift from Faure's "learning to be" to "learning to be productive" (Biesta, 2006a, p.171). The OECD Report referred to lifelong learning as the "development of human capital", so that one participates in learning in order to become "productive and employable" with the necessity to constantly update one's skills due to the changing nature of the global economy (Biesta, 2006a, p.172). Aspin and Chapman (2000, p.17) point out that education is composed of three strands, the economic, the personal and the democratic: (1) the economic strand is for economic growth and prosperity (2) the personal strand relates to an individual's personal development (3) the democratic strand relates to social inclusiveness, and a democratic understanding which will encourage participation to help with developing and sustaining a "more democratic polity and a set of social institutions". These strands are intertwined within a "complex interplay between all three". *The Cologne Charter for Lifelong Learning* (1999) depicted individuals responsible for their own learning; it claimed that it was an individual's duty to participate in lifelong learning for the economic success of their country (Thompson, 2007, pp.166-167).

The OECD Report was a significant step in transforming lifelong education into lifelong learning. Lifelong learning's focus became the development of individuals as human capital for the economy. In contesting the Faure Report (1972), it is the economic strand of lifelong learning with its emphasis on vocational learning for economic success that has become the dominant strand. Adult education has become not just contested but reconfigured, as its priority and purpose have become learning for the economy at the expense of the personal and democratic strands of education. Crowther and Moir (2014, pp. 47-48) point out:

Highlighting the economic imperative at the expense of the other two simply reflects an educational system out of balance with the broader needs of individuals and collectivities.

Lifelong learning developed out of European Union policy to increase economic competitiveness in global markets, and to tackle the high unemployment that was causing a lack of social cohesion in European countries. Faure's principles of lifelong education were replaced with lifelong learning that emphasised the economic strand at the expense of the personal and democratic strands prevalent in lifelong education. This policy trend was underscored by neoliberalism in the UK.

Neoliberal ideology, policies, and practices began to reshape the public sector from the beginnings of Thatcherism in the early 1980s through to the present day. The neoliberal ideas of the economists Friedman and Hayek emerged in the 1970s, and from 1979 became fundamental to the policies of Margaret Thatcher's government during the 1980s and 1990s. Before this, a Keynesian perspective based on a 'social democratic consensus', at the end of World War 11, provided a welfare safety net and protection rights for workers:

Compact between capital and labour and free trade and for states to have a redistributive welfare system and a social wage that provided social security benefits and welfare state services such as health care and education. The state at this time also had the power to regulate its economies and reduce unemployment and ensure full employment.

(Harvey, 2005, pp.11-12)

By 1973 the Keynesian perspective was under strain as a crisis in capital accumulation (assets to create more wealth) emerged, with rising unemployment, accelerating inflation and reduced tax revenues. This brought about a serious recession causing de-industrialisation in western economies (Harvey, 2005, pp.11-12). When growth was strong, a living wage for labour and the distribution of welfare resources did not matter to industrial capitalists. When growth collapsed and the economy became weak, the capitalists, supported by politicians, protected their wealth by bringing an end to the social democratic consensus, and moved to a

neoliberal economic system of capital accumulation (Harvey, 2006, p.148).

According to Bamba (2012, p.2), “Welfare state expansion effectively ended with the economic crisis of the 1970s”.

Bamba 2011 (cited in Schrecker and Bamba, 2015, p.46) points out that the social policy implications of neoliberalism have brought about “transformations of the labour markets, patterns of deindustrialisation, and the expansion of the precariat”.

Harvey (2005, p.2) pointed out that neoliberalism is more than a set of economic ideas in that it is also a political project that aimed to reduce the size of the state by privatising services held within the public sector. The neoliberal state in the U.K. has multiple facets that can be seen through the policies that have undermined labour and created greater socio-economic inequality within UK society (Harvey, 2005, p.23).

Public services, including adult education services, were reorganised along the lines of the private sector and market-driven systems of performance. The purpose of adult education was for economic reasons, and this was supported through a plethora of white papers and reports and quangos from the 1980s onwards in England.

*The Russell Report* (1973), which extended adult education to those who felt they had been marginalised by formal education, was published in line with the Employment and Training Act (1973). This act was responsible for the implementation of the Manpower Services Commission, established in the late 1970s, to deliver training initiatives in response to high unemployment. White papers such as *A New Training Initiative* (MSC 1981), and *Towards an Adult Training Strategy* (MSC 1983), recognised that the demands made by flexibility of the workplace needed not just skills training for young people but also training for adults, and retraining for those whose skills were now outdated. Flexibility involved the reorganisation of work to short-term, precarious jobs to meet the demands of global capitalism. Flexibility was:



Fundamental to government policy for the economy as it was seen as essential for business success, prosperity and employment. Flexibility is associated with a virile and dynamic economy which lifelong learning primarily supports.

(DTI 1998, and DfEE 1998, cited in Crowther 2004, p.125)

Flexibility was not to provide jobs for life but to offer only short-term contracts, which transforms the meaning of work and causes increased anxiety amongst the population:

The corroding of character is an inevitable consequence as 'no long term' disorients action over the long term, loosens bonds of trust and commitment, and divorces will from behaviour.

Sennett (1998, p.31)

A plethora of short-term initiatives to train unemployed people for a flexible economy were delivered at local level, including Community Programmes and the Community Enterprise Programme. The white paper, *Towards an Adult Training Strategy* (MSC, 1983), concluded that there was a need to include special needs groups, such as those requiring additional help with literacy or language skills and people with disabilities, into training programmes, and that information and advice (not adult education guidance) was to be provided to enable people to make informed choices on training. The 1980s *White Paper Training for Employment* saw the implementation of Employment Training and the RESTART Programme. This white paper blamed long term unemployed people for their situation rather than government policy:

Many long term unemployed people have lost touch with the jobs market and lack motivation to take up a job, training or other opportunities.

(cited in Tucket, 1996, pp.47-48)

The introduction of Employment Training resulted in adults on welfare, who were studying under the 21-hour rule in further education, having much stricter conditions

applied to their availability to take up work. This resulted in many leaving their education for precarious work. National Education and Training Targets were introduced from 1986 and they identified lifetime learning targets aimed at the adult workforce and for employers through a system of National Vocational Qualifications.

A further white paper, published in 1988, *Employment for the 1990s*, explained that employers would meet the cost of this expansion of training, as there was a need to generate a learning workforce in the light of industrial change. To address this, Training and Enterprise Councils superseded the Manpower Services Commission to develop, support and expand training for the unemployed and employer sectors at regional level. There was a political commitment to reduce public expenditure and create a smaller state, due to a belief that the market would provide (Tuckett, 1996, p.50).

Since the mid-1970s neoliberal discourses and policies have been radically reshaping the field of education, and adult education has become enmeshed in these policies. The logic of neoliberalism is underpinned by a conviction that economic relations and the ‘discipline of the market’ are paramount, and that the state should take a minimal role in the social realm. This, it is argued will produce benefits for the national economy and develop human capital which in turn will fuel economic competitiveness.

(Bowl, 2014, p.2)

The White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (DES and ED Group, 1991) was aimed at making further education more focused on improving skills linked to national targets. This was to be achieved through Further Education Funding Council money (renamed Skills Funding Agency 2017). National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in literacy and numeracy, special needs provision, English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), and ‘GCSE’ and ‘A’ level courses were to be funded through Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) budgets. Most of this type of provision was delivered via the LEA in its schools and community adult education centres, and by the voluntary sector, as most adults studied part-time, while those adults studying full-time attended further education colleges. This white paper took

responsibility away from the LEA for adult education provision and allocated it to colleges of further education who could then contract out F.E.F.C. funding to the LEA and the voluntary sector for delivery. F.E.F.C funding into the LEA was for vocational learning to meet national training targets with leisure courses to be subsidised by funding from other sources.

According to the White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (cited in Tuckett, 1996, p.51):

Public expenditure on education for adults will be concentrated on courses that can help them in their careers.

F.E.F.C. funding was only to be used for learning for the economy to address the economic crisis, with no recognition of the importance of informal learning that often provides the first steps on to an educational or vocational learning journey. There was no recognition of providing a useful education to address the problems of everyday life as experienced by those living in communities of high unemployment who were dependent on welfare payments. The solution was seen in repetitive training for work schemes. In this trend we can see a marked shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning and now to a new version of the industrial trainer: the employability facilitator.

The concept of employability plays a crucial role in informing lifelong learning and labour market policy in the UK, and the European Union. By the mid-1990s, the European Union had begun to advocate more active labour market policies on employability in order to break the division between the employed and the unemployed. The central focus of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECDs) labour market policy was to target "low-paid and unskilled job seekers [and] enhancing the effectiveness of active labour market policies and lifelong learning to maintain employability" (OECD, 1998, p. 4 cited in Mc Quaid and Lindsay, 2005, pp.197-199).

Brine (2006, pp.649-652) identified how the unemployed became the focus of European Union attention for 'employability' and set the policy direction for this. The White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*, developed by the Commission of the European Communities (CEC 1993), argued that economic and social progress must go hand in hand with economic growth and political/social stability due to the threat posed by rising unemployment. There was reported to be 17 million unemployed (CEC, 1993, p.40). Lifelong learning was at this time closely associated with vocational education and training and was clearly linked to the development of human capital to meet the demands of economic growth and high unemployment. However, rising unemployment was a threat to political and social stability as this could create a "dual society" of those employed and unemployed with the latter possibly becoming socially excluded and marginalised (CEC, 1993, p.118).

Economic competitiveness and social cohesion would be achieved by creating jobs, and by raising levels of education. Lifelong learning was acknowledged as not the sole solution to economic and social problems, but it was expected to solve the problems of economic competitiveness and an unemployment crisis that was leading to social exclusion within populations (CEC, 1993, p.117). Coffield (1999, p.480) points out that in linking people's individual skills development to their own and their nation's economic competitiveness and prosperity education had become a "mere instrument of the economy".

The Luxembourg Strategy (1997) was to make a significant shift in the understanding of 'disadvantage'. The White Paper on Growth (CEC 1993) had identified disadvantage within an understanding of social exclusion, a concept of multi-deprivation which recognised that members of certain social groups were more likely than others to experience disadvantage. Their disadvantage was not attributed to the fault of individuals but rather was caused by structural inequalities. The Luxembourg Strategy, informed by the Treaty of Amsterdam (Commission of the European Communities, 1997a) and the Special Luxembourg European Council on

Employment (Commission of the European Communities, 1997b), shifted the discourse of disadvantage to the individual, who was now responsible and to blame if they became disadvantaged. Blame was therefore no longer apportioned to the state but the individual. The second significant shift from the White Paper on Growth (CEC 1993) was directed at employment, with a new aim of “employability”. Employability is the responsibility and ability of an individual to become employed, rather than, necessarily, the state of employment itself. Thus, individualisation became linked with the concept of employability (Brine, 2006, pp.649-652). This is a state of constantly becoming ready for the labour market through repetitive training, and of constantly creating a new economic identity despite deficient labour market conditions.

The Foster Report of Further Education, *Realising the Potential: A Review of the Future Role of Further Education Colleges* (2005) represents a significant landmark in the history of post-16 further education. It offers a definition of the purpose of the post-16 further education sector, which was to inform the White Paper, *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* (2006). The vision that the Foster Report put forward is of a post-16 further education as the cornerstone of skills training. Paragraph 57 of the report sets out its purpose as: “A focus on vocational skills building is not a residual choice, but a vital building block in the UK's platform for future prosperity”. The White Paper on post-16 further education (2006), in accepting the main recommendation of the Foster Report (2005), established a new mission for the sector as the “key strategic role is to help people, gain the skills and qualifications for employability” (DFES, 2006, p.21). This new mission does not recognise post-16 further education as having a role in providing “second chance” education for those seeking to re-engage with a more general education, but only in providing an instrumental education for the economy. Coffield explains:

A greater error lies in the choice of employability as the core mission [for the post 16 further education sector] for it is an empty, unsatisfying concept which will sell our people short...In the language of C. Wright Mills, employability turns the public issue of the dearth of good jobs into the private trouble of constant retraining.

A definition of the concept of employability in neoliberal times is now understood as “the character or quality of being employable” (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005, p.199). The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has defined employability as the “possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers” (CBI, 1999, p.1). For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets, how they present them to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and the labour market environment) within which they seek work (Hillage and Pollard, 1998, p.12).

According to the *UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Employability Skills Project* (2008, pp.103-104), there is little explicit reference to how employability was defined in the promotional literature of government employment projects. This report, citing Meager (2008), highlights the decline in training and skills development and the rise in the number of programmes that emphasise job searches. The *UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Employability Challenge Full Report* (2009, p.9-10) pointed out the very narrow focus of ‘employability skills’:

There is no agreement on a definition of employability skills...but almost all definitions are in practice quite similar around personal communication skills, using numbers, words and technology, problem solving, team working and customer care. We take employability skills to be the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require.

Significant structural changes within the economy in the UK since de-industrialisation occurred in the 1980s have changed labour market conditions that now mostly require on demand, short-term, flexible workers to meet the low skill requirements of service sector industries. Most of this work is low paid with workers’ dependent upon welfare payments between spells of unemployment, and attendance at repetitive government programmes. These flexible working conditions, supported by a welfare to work system, are no way out of poverty or into permanent

work. In some case's it leads to social exclusion when people are constantly rejected by employers or sanctioned by a welfare system that stops their benefits.

In government policy, the concept of employability is not just about developing employability skills to secure a job. Employability has a role in tackling the social inclusion of those who are marginalised from the labour market by mandating them to attend government programmes focused on employability skills. This system may be inclusive by mandating the unemployed to attend programmes, but in the long term it can contribute to them being socially excluded from the labour market as it is complicit in churning the unemployed into poor working conditions to the point where, as in the cases in this study, they are socially excluded by employers. Cook points out that "low-paid, casualised work within the UK economy means that work-first approaches have the potential to accentuate rather than mitigate social exclusion (Cook cited McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005, p.204).

Government Programmes for employability reflect both a reaction to the social consequences of high levels of long-term unemployment, concern at increasing inactivity rates, and an attempt to curtail rising social expenditure directed towards welfare recipients of working age. It is argued that policies to enhance the employability of unemployed groups are required in order to re-establish the balance between the right to financial support through the social security system and the responsibilities of unemployed welfare claimants (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005, p.204). The government's Employability Skills Programme, in focusing on making the welfare claimant work for their benefits to supply a short-term labour market, has no understanding of the effects of weak labour market conditions, especially in de-industrialised areas, which prevent individuals from supplying their employability skills to the market. The concept of employability in policy documents is focused on the "individual- centred, supply-side solutions" (Gazier cited in McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, p.203).

The concept of employability has become closely tied to stricter welfare reform acts and policies since 2011 that reconfigured the Welfare State into a Workfare State. The Welfare Reform Bill (2011) became the Welfare Reform Act (2012), followed by the Jobseekers (Back to Work Scheme) Act (2013). These acts emphasised mandatory work activity schemes for welfare claimants. The Welfare Reform Bill (2011) announced that there was a:

New tougher conditionality regime for benefit claimants. This reflects the growing political consensus in recent years, that work is the best route out of poverty, and that the benefit system should encourage claimants into work via enhanced ‘personalised conditionality’ – i.e., directed mandatory activity to prepare for and obtain work. Ending what has been regularly described as the ‘something for nothing’ culture of the benefit system is perceived to be a popular message to impart to the public and the media.

Simmons (2011, p.1)

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) announced in section 16 of the act “work related requirements”. Section 16 refers to “a work preparation request” which requires the claimant to: (1) attend a skills assessment; (2) improve personal presentation; (3) participate in training; (4) participate in an employment programme; (5) undertaking work experience or work placement; (6) a work-focused health related assessment which means the extent to which the person’s capability for work may be improved by taking steps in relation to their physical or mental health condition.

Since 2012 employability welfare to work policies have focused on mandatory, client-centred training programmes, which include sanctioning (loss of welfare benefit) and an increasingly stringent job-seeking regime in an attempt to force unemployed people to enter low-paid work. This process of ‘churning’ learners through ‘welfare to work’ government programmes is a form of social control and discipline with the underlying political aim of changing attitudes towards work in return for meagre welfare payments. This is a significant departure and contrast from



the past when one was entitled to state support without conditions being attached (Robinson cited in Sunley et al., 2001, p.485).

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) in introducing work-focused health related assessments to improve a person's physical or mental condition for work is another significant shift in welfare to work policies. Welfare claimants are surveilled electronically while in attendance on government programmes, and are subjected to coercive methods through psychological interventions that will bring about attitudinal behavioural changes, as they must have work-appropriate attitudes to achieve employability. Compulsory coercive methods of "positive affect" are implemented through "psychological interventions that aim to modify cognitive function or emotional disposition" (Friedli and Stern, 2015, p.42). It is believed that such interventions will change behaviours to enable this most vulnerable group of learners to obtain work, which is a paradox given the market failure in de-industrialised areas.

These disciplinary psychological interventions do not increase the chances of securing work but increase feelings of failure in welfare claimants as they shift the blame of unemployment from systematic failure in the labour market to the personal failure of the individual. Through these psychological interventions, individuals have been given a picture of being psychologically deficit, and that increases anxiety and reduces wellbeing in participants (Friedli and Stern, 2015, p.41).

The neoliberal state seeks to promote the freedom of individuals to determine their own fate (Barratt cited in Danson et al., 2015, p.286). Unfortunately for the unemployed on government programmes, this freedom to act is intensely regulated, restricted, disciplinary and coercive through governmentality and its management processes that seek to regulate behaviour and change attitudes in order that people comply (Foucault, 1991, pp.87-104). Bauman points out that despite being given the

freedom to act, individuals have no control over their fate as “biographical solutions to systematic contradictions is an oxymoron...it may be sought but it cannot be found” (Bauman, 2001a, p.68).

In seeking solutions to structural unemployment, individuals are blamed for being jobless rather than an acknowledgment of a deficit labour market. If employability is about ‘the character or quality of being employable’, then there clearly must be a role not only for an individual’s characteristics but also for personal circumstances and labour market conditions. Employability should be understood as being derived from, and affected by, individual characteristics and circumstances to broader external (social, institutional and economic) factors that influence a person’s ability to get a job. “The supply and demand of labour is beyond the control of the individual whatever their characteristics” (McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, p.204). As Brown et al. (2003, p.110) point out, “employability cannot be defined solely on individual characteristics”.

The government’s Employability Skills Programme, in working with marginalised people for employability, has created a model of social control. Social control models are programmes that are concerned solely with encouraging the unemployed to enter employment. The model of social control in the Employability Skills Programme is where the employability trainer reinforces the status quo to meet government targets for getting numbers of unemployed people into work. In doing so, it offers no meaningful curriculum through dialogue with learners on the socio-political context of unemployment and the social reality of their lives. Johnston (1992, p. 67) calls for educators and trainers to “avoid colluding with social control models”. In the case of this study, the employability trainer, in colluding with the status quo, is complicit in reinforcing churning of the unemployed between welfare and short-term jobs.

## SECTION TWO

### **Alternative traditions of public education: the development of community-based adult education**

Since the 1944 Education Act the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have had a statutory duty to secure adequate provision for the further education of adults. During the immediate post war period, from the 1950s to the 1970s, there was a massive expansion through the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) of non-certificated adult education provision with the minimum of public funds. It was anticipated that by increasing provision it would become equally available to all. A review of LEA provision took place in the early 1970s that contested this common assumption. The *Russell Report* (1973) and the *Disadvantaged Adult Report* (1973) identified a gap in participation in adult education for those for whom the formal education system had provided little benefit (Tucket, 1996, p.47). Under-represented groups such as those with literacy and numeracy difficulties, those who did not speak English as their first language, unemployed people, and people with disabilities, were excluded or had self-excluded themselves from adult education.

The LEAs responded to the Russell Report by developing new curriculum areas such as Adult Literacy and Numeracy and English for Speakers of other Languages, and courses for unemployed people and those with learning difficulties. The dominant paradigm in community adult education from the 1970s was focused on encouraging participation by these under-represented groups. They were to be schooled across a multitude of community sites from schools to community centres so that they could, in the long term, compete on a more equal basis for jobs (Tucket, 1996, p.47).

Thompson explains that these under-represented groups became known as disadvantaged groups, and were defined in community adult education literature as well as by public sector workers including adult education as:

Feckless, unconfident, incompetent adults who, because of learning difficulties or lack of social and life skills, are inadequate in their day to day lives. They are not seen as victims of social problems but as those who contribute to their own victimisation by their irresolution or fatalism or apathy.

(Thompson, 1988, p.188)

Apathy was given as a reason for non-participation. This deficit model of participation was seen as a solution to the problem of integrating those non-participants who were experiencing social inequalities. Instead of providing adult education that offered ‘really useful knowledge’ for marginalised groups to have a voice in fighting back against structural inequalities, the LEAs “schooled” adults (Crowther and Shaw, 1997, p.272).

Shortly after the *Russell Report* (1973), North East England began to face an economic crisis through de-industrialisation (see chapter 2, p.44-47). In NEE this has resulted in some of the highest socio-economic inequalities in any region of the UK in relation to unemployment, income, education, health, mental health, drug and alcohol addiction and patriarchal oppression. Such structural inequalities produced by a capitalist class who socially control and exploit the working class through short-term labour market conditions has produced anxiety in the population. Decades of inequality weaken the voice of the marginalised working class as their struggle in daily life is in coping with a strict welfare system and repetitive training in order to supply a short-term labour market that discards them at a whim. Such growing inequalities have contributed to their loss of trust in the state and a low turnout to vote in the electoral system that results in the loss of their voice.

According to Dorling (2015, p.364), “in the UK half of the electorate don’t vote” and such unequal societies as the UK disenfranchise people into thinking “they can make

no difference, to feel that they are powerless”. The British Election Study (2010) points out that in 2010 the difference in reported turnout between the working class and the middle class was 19 percentage points, compared to less than just 5 percentage points in 1964. Amongst English Regions, North East England had the lowest turnout to vote in the 2010 General Election with a 61.1% turnout compared to South West England at 69%. The 2015 General Election produced a similar result, with NEE at 61.8% compared to South West England at 69.5% (Rallings and Thrasher, 2015, p.5). The turnout for the 2017 General Election in the Easington and North Durham areas where this research study took place, in County Durham, was Easington at 58.3% and North Durham at 64.6% compared to the highest turnout in Twickenham in the South of England at 79.5% (General Elections Online: 2017 General Election Results). These results show that NEE has by far the lowest turnout of any English Region and that the former coalfield area of Easington is lower than the overall NEE figure. The voting turnout indicates differences between poorer and more affluent areas.

Reay (2005, pp.914-917) points out that the education of working class children under the auspices of raising their levels of achievement through testing and assessment has caused psychological “hidden injuries”. The emotional consequences of this are fear of failure and a loss of confidence. Pimlott (1981, p.51) explained that unemployed men saw redundancy as a sign of personal failure although its true cause was a crisis within capitalism that was beyond their control. A poor education resulted in them having no confidence to voice their concerns in addressing structural inequalities, and their low turn out to vote showed little confidence in politicians and the elite in addressing inequality. Public education for adults, in response to the *Russell Report* (1973), did not provide a channel for the marginalised to challenge structural inequalities.

It is the voice of the capitalist class who are the decision makers as the working class have little say or control over their fate:

At the foundation of the whole complex pattern of inequality lies the single, simple fact of the capitalist structure of British society...it remains the case that in both economic and political terms class relations are based upon the division of ownership and control of the means of production (and increasingly financial institutions) by the capitalist class, and structural exploitation of those who live by selling their power, the working class...With this comes not just economic inequality but also political inequality. The power of decision making resides overwhelmingly with those who are integrated either materially or ideologically - or both - into the economic ruling class.

Taylor, 1986, pp.1-2

Post war adult education provision did not engage those who had not benefited from a poor formal education and were experiencing unemployment. The *Russell Report*, 1973, had recognised this gap in participation in provision of the unemployed, who were experiencing growing socio-economic inequalities. The LEAs, in responding to *the Russell Report*, offered, in general terms, a deficit model of provision. This provision schooled the working class for the economy rather than providing ‘really useful knowledge’ that would enable those marginalised in disadvantaged communities to challenge growing structural inequalities. In the following paragraphs I explain that what emerged was a mix of models of provision, alongside and within the LEA provision, which offered hope through more varied forms of adult education. The characteristics of these four models are explained, and how they relate to loyalty and voice. It is to this that we now turn.

The following four traditions of adult education emphasised very different rationales and practices: these were the liberal, personal development, radical, and social purpose traditions (Bowl, 2014, pp.10&34).

Liberal education is “the pursuit of knowledge for purposes of enhanced aesthetic appreciation, increased intellectual awareness or heightened analytical powers” (Brookfield, 1983, p.173). Liberal education, with its critical and enquiring approach,

offered an enriching experience in science, the arts and literature and had “an emphasis on knowledge for its own sake rather than for vocational or utilitarian purposes” (Taylor, 1986, p.9). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a liberal education was for the elite rather than the working class, for whom public education was to meet the demands of industry (Westergaard and Resler cited in Taylor 1986, p.9). In the 1970s and 1980s the liberal model of adult education was extended to the working class through a range of certificated and non-certificated courses delivered across a plethora of community sites (Fletcher, cited in Brookfield 1983, p.66). This model is identified with the harmonious community of ‘*gemeinschaft*’ where everyone is seen to be in harmony with one another.

The liberal model fails to identify the socio-economic inequalities that exist in working class communities and consequently fails to provide a curriculum relevant to the social reality of working class lives (Brookfield, 1983, p.67). Programmes offered were delivered through pre-written learning materials that were thought to meet learners’ needs, rather than starting with the inequalities experienced by the learner (Lovett, 1975, pp.12-13). The adult educator used traditional pedagogical methods to transmit knowledge to learners rather than encouraging dialogue and giving recognition to the life experiences and social reality of learners in the educational process. According to Jackson (1995, p.184):

Adult education constructs knowledge and does not merely pass it on...It was precisely by engaging directly with the interests of people in working-class communities facing major problems, that adult education seemed to have a real if marginal contribution to make in meeting the challenge which they faced.

For Freire (1972, pp.45-47), such traditional pedagogical methods of “banking” are unlikely to develop a critical consciousness that enable people to identify and challenge the inequalities in their lives. It was, therefore, considered that the liberal model did not challenge structural inequalities or encourage a voice and loyalty to a community but only provided knowledge for its own sake. Today, liberal education

that was once concerned with “culture and humanities” (Jarvis, 2010, p.53) has now been reduced to “a form of therapy concerned with health and self-improvement” (Thompson, 2007, p.166). It has primarily become a “middle class leisure pursuit” purchased by the consumer (Bauman, cited in Jarvis 2010, p.54).

The personal development model of community adult education provides a starting point from which to begin to learn. People have different starting points which motivate them to learn, and that sets them off in different trajectories. Personal development can be individualistic and therapeutic or it can be a positive experience that enables people to connect with others and to progress to another stage with new found confidence. How people start and where they end up may be very different. Bowl (2014, p.10) refers to it as a humanistic approach concerned with personal growth and development, and self- actualisation. Drawing on the influential work of Carl Rogers (1969), Bowl ties in personal and social development with therapeutic education (Bowl, 2014, p.10).

Today therapeutic education is associated with a curriculum based on happiness and wellbeing to build emotional resilience and make individuals feel better and more positive and confident about themselves. It encourages learners to get in touch with their feelings and respond to their experiences emotionally rather than intellectually. This model diminishes the idea of individuals as agents who can fulfil their potential by transforming their lives and contribute to bringing about social change to individuals who are ‘dysfunctional’ or victims due to their experiences. This model may fill a gap between liberal education for its own sake and the economic model for skills training. However, it can be corrosive as individuals become introspective in focusing on their happiness and wellbeing rather than realising their potential (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, p.86).

Personal development can also offer a liberating learning experience to those seeking a fresh purpose in life. Personal development can be a precursor to the



empowerment of an individual or group. This is an educational process whereby individuals and groups begin to become aware of their social world, their class, race and gender and the oppressive structures and dominant culture within which they live. They become aware of their ability to act and have a voice on behalf of themselves and others to challenge inequality. Personal development may reduce isolation, provide mutual support, and give a thirst for more radical education and access to broader social networks that will enable the individual to make a valuable contribution to the community. Willis (1991, p.74) points out that the personal development tradition of adult education, “increased self-esteem, empowerment, optimism and hope. It embraces a sense of confidence ... and a desire to collaborate for human betterment”.

Social purpose education has a long social history as it is aimed at the working class who experience socio-economic inequalities and are seeking social and political change (Taylor 1986, p.8).

Social purpose education can be characterised in the following terms: (1) participants/learners are treated as citizens and social actors (2) curriculum reflects shared social and political interests (3) knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance these collective interests (4) pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission (5) critical understanding is linked to social action and political engagement (6) education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change.

(Martin 2008, pp.9-10)

Radical education is a distinct version of social purpose education for social and political transformation and both are to be found outside of the walls of institutions and in community settings (Martin, 2007, pp.4-14).

The radical model recognises that communities have differences and inequalities in class, status, and power, unlike that of a harmonious ‘*gemeinschaft*’ community. It is sometimes identified with ‘popular education’ in Latin America. Crowther et al (2005, pp.2-3) explain that popular education is “rooted in the real interests and

struggles of people, and is overtly political and critical of the status quo as well as being committed to progressive social and political change”. Its purpose is the struggle for social justice and a more equitable society. As well as addressing poverty issues, it looks at “marginalised groups as an integral part of the wider struggle for social justice” (Crowther et al, 2005, pp.2-3).

The pedagogical methods of radical and social purpose education are those of Freire’s dialogical process. Freire offers an alternative pedagogy to the “banking” method of the transmission of knowledge. Learners are treated as equals to the adult educator and a space is created for negotiation and dialogue between tutor and learner (Freire, 1972, p.53). Freire’s dialogical method of critical education engages learners in the social conditions that are oppressing them and provides a space to question oppressive structures. Through dialogue, learners begin to critically reflect on their situation and develop a political consciousness that challenges them to take action. This process is known as “conscientization”, which is the deepening of awareness followed by action that contributes to social change. Barr (1999, pp.14-15) points out that, “Freire’s educational method rests, crucially, on developing with people a notion of themselves as subjects, able to determine their situation rather than being mere objectives of it”.

This pedagogy is collective and focused primarily on group as distinct from individual learning and development. It attempts, wherever possible, to forge a direct link between education and the social and political concerns experienced by learners, and social action. An example of radical education was the Adult Learning Project (1979) in Edinburgh which provided a model that adapted Freire’s methods for post literacy work. Freire’s pedagogy of a dialogical process inspired critical thinking with a range of groups experiencing social inequalities (Crowther, cited in Kirkwood 2011, p. xviii).

A further example of radical education is Lovett's work as a Worker's Education Association tutor through the 'Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project' (Lovett, 1975, p.138). Lovett had recognised the working class were becoming increasingly disengaged from adult education as it had increasingly become part of a middle class culture (Lovett, 1975, p.12). To make adult education more meaningful to the working class, Lovett created a new blueprint for adult education that was a model for "participation" to engage "non-participants" in education "that has to do with everyday living" (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.10).

Lovett recognised that adult education alone cannot bring about social change in the lives of learners and called for adult educators to work outside of institutional settings and alongside community development to engage community groups to identify inequalities. Socio-economic inequalities found in everyday working class life became the basis of a curriculum for a local education programme that used Freire's methods of dialogue and negotiation (Freire, 1972, p.53). Lovett proposed a network model involving external agencies (to the community) to relocate educational resources into the communities (Lovett, 1975).

This model of adult education provided opportunities for people to retain "loyalty" to the community, and acted as an "active agent of change for their voice to be heard in public debate", as well as providing an opportunity for those who wished to "exit from the community through progression to academic courses" (Lovett, 1975, p.141). This approach aimed to ensure that people in working class communities were able to "experience education that more closely fitted their lives...[and] challenged the cultural politics and hierarchical structure of adult education provision" (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.10).

The social purpose and radical models of popular education often have a central role to play in social movements in the constructing of knowledge (Jackson, 1995, p.196: Martin, 2007, pp.4-14). Popular social movements have developed in post-industrial countries since de-industrialisation and the demise of trade unions that provided a

route for collective action. Their purpose is to focus on specific political and social issues and act as a resource to encourage people to act against the status quo on matters of concern in order to bring about social change. Adult education and community work can contribute to this process. Radical and social purpose education aligned with social movements are a way in which learners acquire “really useful knowledge” (Crowther and Shaw, 1997, pp.266 & 271).

This is a democratic process of adult education and it is this democratising force that has come under attack in recent years through neoliberal policies and practices. Liberating models have been side lined and undermined through the dominant discourse of learning for the economy. The shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning has disguised, to some extent, this metamorphosis (Crowther and Shaw, 2014).

Arguably, personal development, radical, and social purpose models of adult education aimed to engage the working class and marginalised groups in the generation of knowledge on matters of concern to them, personally and collectively, in their everyday lives. Through the Freirean dialogical process that provides space to question social conditions and structural inequalities learners can produce ‘really useful knowledge’ that allows them to challenge and act back on oppressive circumstances. This is a democratic process and a force that has come under attack, and is contested through neoliberal policies that have produced a dominant discourse of learning for the economy. In post-industrial times we have seen a rise in social movements to address social and political issues (Gilroy cited in Crowther and Shaw, 1997, p.266).

Radical and social purpose education aligned with social movements is a powerful way in which ‘really useful knowledge’ can continue to bring about progressive change.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Public Education today: at the edge and on the edge**

The idea of public education is clearly a long way away from the employability trainer that recent policy has promoted. The significance of this for adult education is captured in Biesta's term of "learnification" and how it differs from a "good education". Biesta suggests that a good education generally performs three different but related functions, which he refers to as qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Qualifications provide knowledge and skills to do something. Socialisation assimilates individuals into existing ways of doing and being. In this way education plays a role in the continuation of culture and tradition with regards to their desirable and undesirable aspects. Subjectification is the opposite of socialisation as it is not about assimilating people into an existing order, but about becoming an independent thinker of that order. These three functions of education overlap (Biesta, 2009, pp. 41-43).

In this chapter 'subjectification' is used as a positive term by Biesta, and is about 'becoming an independent thinker'. This term is used differently in Chapter 6 and at other points throughout the thesis where it is used negatively as a way in which powerful groups undermine people's sense of identity.

Biesta (2009, p.39) describes the discourse of "learnification" as "the translation of everything there is to say about education in terms of learning and learners". It is related to a shift that has redefined teaching as the facilitation of learning, and education is reduced to the provision of learning for the economy. It can be seen in the use of the word 'learner' instead of 'student'. It is manifest in the transformation of adult education into lifelong learning. It has turned education from a 'right' into a 'duty' for individuals to participate in learning for the economy (Biesta, 2009, pp.38-39). Learning is now in the hands of the learner who becomes a 'consumer' with an eye on the needs of employers in the labour market.

Biesta (2009, pp.39-41) goes on to explain the problems connected with the new language of learning. One is that “learning” is basically an individualistic concept which abstracts people from context and relationships. Secondly, “learning” is a “process term”, which means it “denotes processes and activities but is open — if not empty — with regard to content and direction”. As an “individualistic concept”, it refers to what people as individuals do. “Learning” stands in sharp contrast to the concept of “education”, which implies a “relationship” where someone is educating someone else and the person educating has a sense of purpose in relation to the methods of delivering curriculum content. Education is therefore about a professional relationship and a dialogue between teachers and students rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge.

Biesta (2006b, p.31) points out that this emphasis on learning is making us think of:

Education as an economic transaction not only misconstrues the role of the learner and the educator in the educational relationship, it also results in a situation in which questions about the content and purpose of education become subject to the forces of the market instead of being the concern of professional judgement and democratic deliberation.

Through “learnification” and the “banking method” the role of educator has been undermined as the content can be delivered anywhere at any time through a range of technologies that break down the teacher (now facilitator) and student relationship. This has brought about a “democratic deficit” within education as it has erased the democratic values that guide the role of the teacher (Biesta, 2006b, p.18). The learner is an individualistic, “independent learner” who has been given responsibility for their learning, and success or failure is in their hands.

In changing the purpose, practice and language of education for economic purposes, the process of ‘learnification’ has narrowed the meaning of education. In marginalising the wider strands of education such as the “personal and democratic”

(Aspin and Chapman, 2000, p.17), this has contributed to the loss of education for an individual's personal development and social inclusiveness as well as an education for democratic understanding. Biesta (2009, pp. 41-43) has referred to the "personal and democratic" as the key to "good education" through the functions of "socialisation" and "subjectification".

'Learnification' has gone hand-in-hand with the demise of community adult education since the 1980s, and is prevalent in this early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to policy changes and funding predominantly for learning for the economy. In addition to this, many Third Sector community adult education providers who delivered radical and social purpose education that met the needs of their communities have experienced budget cuts and faced closure due to austerity measures since 2009 (VONNE, April 2014, pp.1-3). These Third Sector non-government organisations that helped poor people to counteract the effects of neoliberalism in educating them to have a clear understanding of how social, political and economic factors are affecting their lives and how to bring about social change, faced a crisis. Rather than close their doors they did not challenge the state but have become 'NGOised' (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013, p.1-6). This means they have now become complicit in allowing themselves to be funded by the government to deliver Employability Skills Programmes and work to meet government targets rather than meeting the agenda as once set by their communities on issues that matter. This has come at the expense of voice and loyalty, which are being lost within communities as the Employability Skills Programme is a model of social control rather than one that gives the individual autonomy to speak out.

There is little room for complacency in community adult education as it continues to survive on the edges of the dominant economic model of learning for the economy. Those in need of radical and social purpose models of community education live on

the edge of society and need ‘really useful knowledge’ which will enable them to bring about social change rather than have things done to them.

Crowther and Moir (2014, p.52) look at ways in which community adult education and its learners can be brought in from the edge. Being on the edge they see as an opportunity to challenge the hegemonic model of learning for the economy. This model is increasing socio-economic inequalities as the unemployed are becoming more socially excluded from the labour market, and moved out to the edges of society. This model of social control does not provide a platform for the projection of the unemployed voice to be critical of the status quo.

Crowther and Moir (2014, p.52) recognise that by developing what Gramsci calls a counter hegemonic project and distinguishing the differences between what Gramsci identified as “common sense” and “good sense”. Common sense is an uncritical and accepting view of the world, as distinct from good sense which involves a critique of taken for granted views and understanding of the way one views the world. ‘Good sense’ helps people gain new insights for a different way of seeing the world. The key for Gramsci was to develop people’s good sense so they could become aware of their situation and come together to act to change it. It is the development of good sense that will help to build a counter hegemonic project in community adult education.

In challenging hegemony through good sense, Crowther and Shaw (2014, pp.393-394) see the importance of reviving the traditional historical models of radical and social purpose education and propose three broad pedagogical models of Activism, Participation and Liberation (Table 1, p.97). In order to reassert these models, they propose a renegotiating of the terms of engagement between adult education and community development:



If adult education is made more political and community development more educational, the development of praxis is more likely to be achieved. Adult education could provide the expertise necessary for building a curriculum for critical engagement, whilst community development could provide the knowledge and skills capable of turning such engagement into confident, committed and effective action... A curriculum making the connections between macro relations of power and micro local experience as a two-way process by reframing social problems in political terms and combining specificity in strategy at local level with large-scale social and political analysis could provide the basis for a realistic programme of action which takes account of local political conditions as well as wider global processes.

(Crowther and Shaw, 2014, p.399)

In renegotiating these terms of engagement between adult education and community education a fourth model of democratisation is developed (Table 1, p.97). Crowther and Shaw (2017, p.8) point out that “democracy” is mostly associated with government elections. As pointed out in this chapter (pages 81-82) there is a lower turnout to vote in the North East region than in other English regions, which indicates differences between poorer and more affluent areas in voting in government elections. Crowther and Shaw (2017, p.9) also define “democracy” as a concept that is concerned with “political equality” in everyday life. Thinking of democracy as political equality provides the opportunity for people to think critically about how they can influence decisions that are affecting their lives (Table 1, p.97).

Democratisation provides the opportunity for learners who are marginalised from society and feel they are powerless to change things (as identified through a low turnout vote in poorer areas) to actively participate in an education that will enable them to explore what democracy means and what kind of democracy they can want to see developed. Crowther and Shaw (2017, p.9) point out that learning for democracy is concerned with “how citizens can actively shape the society they want to live in – as compared with the society they currently live in”.

Learning for democracy is the key purpose of education in unequal societies that produce social injustice through state policies and practices that are the cause of structural inequalities. Through learning for democracy, grassroots engagement can

be established with local communities to help them explore the relationship between “private troubles” and “public issues” and what this distinction means for democracy (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.11). This produces an education that builds a curriculum out of the social problems experienced by the community and broadens out these issues into a wider political context. In doing so this provides the community with the opportunity for:

Dialogue and the possibility of dissent [which] means learning to argue... [and] express beliefs...democracy is something to be negotiated rather than handed down from above. Citizens require the opportunity to talk back to the state.

(Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.10)

Key to learning for democracy are adult education practitioners. These practitioners, as outlined in this chapter, are compromised by neoliberal governmentality that seeks to control them to meet the government’s agenda for learning for the economy rather than free them to critically engage with their communities and act in solidarity with them for social change. Crowther and Shaw (2017, p.11) point out that practitioners who remain “neutral” in not engaging with their communities in this way reinforce the status quo rather than acting back against the state to redress balances of power. Practitioners need to be clear where their allegiances lie - to the state or to their communities. Crowther and Shaw point out (2017, p.11):

Democracy lives through ordinary people’s actions; it does not depend on state sanction. Practitioners should be in everyday contact with people on their own ground and on their own terms.

Williams (1961, p.163) had argued for a public education that was a democratising force that would produce critical thinkers to contribute to a rapidly changing democratic society. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the dominant social character of education is learning for the economy which provides only ‘useful knowledge’ for global economic competitiveness and not ‘really useful knowledge’ that enables individuals to take collective action to address social inequalities and bring about social change.

The dominant role of the industrial trainer, rather than the public educator who encouraged education for loyalty and a voice for commitment to communities and democracy, became predominant when the traditions of radical and social purpose adult education suffered a demise when education became subjected to the economy.

Crowther and Shaw (2017) offer a new opportunity to reinvigorate public education as a democratising force through the processes of learning for democracy. This process will provide the working class and those marginalised from society with an education that values them and enables them to recognise that they are not powerless but that they do have the power to influence and bring change to their communities. In doing so they will address the social problems they are experiencing and come to have some degree of control over their lives. This is a very different educational experience to that of state schooling that did not “value the working class” (Reay, 2009, p.24), and an education where the working class were subjected to discipline and obedience to make industry operate effectively and for economic success (Williams, 1961, p.163). Williams (1961, p.164) points out, “educational opportunities have always depended upon one’s class”.

Learning for democracy requires adult education practitioners who are free from the constraints of neoliberal governmentality if they are to work in solidarity with their working class communities to address increasing social inequalities.

Table 1. Pedagogical purposes

Pedagogical purpose	Constituency	Focus/Content	Role of Educator	Types of action
Activism	Political and community activists	Political analysis; Linking local (micro) experience with national/global (macro) structures and processes	Creating public space for discussion; Providing counter information; Promoting debate and analysis	Building critical alliances within and beyond the locality; Broadening issues; Campaigning; Direct action
Participation	The community	Public education; Local experience and knowledge; Group formation; Skills development; Access to other providers	Networker; Guidance provider; Resource finder; Teacher	Building new local, democratic, informed institutional structures; Celebrating community identity
Liberation	Marginalised and disempowered groups	Structure, culture and identity and the relationships between them; Linking biography and history so that personal experience is situated and politicised	Consciousness raising; Confidence building; Connecting personal and political dimensions; Developing an analysis of cultural and political forms of power; Producing 'really useful knowledge' <sup>4</sup>	Experimenting with alternative forms of organisation; Creating leadership roles for the powerless; Campaigning
Democratisation	Marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups	Strategic engagement with participatory and representative forms of democracy at a range of appropriate levels; Advocating a democratic culture in private and public domains	Building grassroots relationships in communities; Redefining 'social problems' with local people; Building curriculum from the experience of contradictions	Reasserting public interest and public spaces; Claiming legitimacy in invited and claimed spaces; Selecting appropriate scales of action; Making strategic alliances; Producing counter-hegemonic resources

Through these four approaches those experiencing structural inequalities and social injustice in marginalised communities are likely to make a difference to their lives through a clear understanding of their social reality and what collective action needs to be taken against oppressive structures that have placed them on the edge of society.

## **Conclusion**

Public adult education and its liberal, personal development, social purpose and radical traditions provided a range of education opportunities for people to benefit from adult education. The liberal tradition had an emphasis on knowledge for its own sake but the liberating models of personal development, social purpose and radical education provided opportunities whereby communities could collectively generate knowledge on matters of concern to them in their everyday lives. Collective action, if necessary, could bring about social change. These traditions offered an alternative to the economic model of adult education. There has been a demise in these liberating traditions that were contested by European and UK lifelong learning policies that diminished lifelong education policy in favour of lifelong learning for learning to be productive for the economy. This has resulted in a narrowing of the focus of lifelong learning as it does not address the personal and democratic strands of adult education. The dominant social character of education has become economic i.e. the only thing it focuses on is an economic rationale.

Lifelong learning policy was developed in response to the threat that high unemployment imposed. A 'dual society' was being created of employed and unemployed groups, which had the potential to create political and social instability, a lack of social cohesion and social exclusion. Lifelong learning was not just about employment but also social inclusion. Lifelong learning was seen as one of the solutions to this economic and social crisis, however, this was to subject and reconfigure adult education to the needs of the economy. In doing so, public sector community adult education that offered liberating models of adult education has become controlled through neoliberal governmentality. This is creating new 'subjectivities', who are being coerced to deliver learning for the economy rather than social purpose education.

Lifelong learning at its conception was seen as synonymous with vocational education for skills development for employment, economic competitiveness and prosperity. This significantly changed with the Luxembourg Strategy (1997) that opposed the White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (CEC 1993) in relation to the terms in which it defined 'disadvantaged' and 'employment'. The White Paper on Growth (CEC 1993) did not attribute being disadvantaged to the fault of the individual but to structural inequalities. The Luxembourg Strategy (1997) shifted being 'disadvantaged' on to the individual, who was now personally to blame if they were disadvantaged. The aim of 'employment' was now changed to the aim of 'employability'. Employability is the responsibility and ability of an individual to become employed rather than, necessarily, the state of employment itself. Thus, individualisation became linked with the concept of employability, which is a state of constantly becoming ready for the labour market through repetitive employability skills training in order to constantly create a new economic identity.

Employability is now understood as the characteristics that an individual must have in order to become employable. Employability has become closely tied to the strict conditional requirements of the Welfare Reform Act (2012). This act mandates the unemployed to attend the government's Employability Skills Programme which is narrowly focused on 'employability skills' to prepare for and obtain work. This programme subjects its learners to coercive methods through psychological interventions to bring about attitudinal behavioural changes for appropriate attitudes to achieve employability. This is a paradox given the market failure in de-industrialised areas. This is an oppressive model of social control that ghettoises and surveilles unemployed learners in panopticon conditions and reinforces feelings of failure and blame if work is not obtained.

The neoliberal state within the UK had promoted the freedom of individuals to determine their own fate and choose an identity. Those living in de-industrialised areas had been freed from the routine of work but neoliberal economic policies of flexibilisation, a precarious and weak labour market with its flexible working

practices, feminisation of the workplace, and welfare reform have shown that the unemployed living in these areas are not masters of their own fate. The unemployed spend their time being churned through government programmes that, in the case of the learners in this study, has resulted in social exclusion from the labour market. This is a paradox given that social inclusion was an aim of lifelong learning policies, but economic policies have failed the unemployed learner.

In the past, the industrial trainer of public education had been central to educating the workforce to make industry operate effectively, and was tied to the demands of the economy through the needs of employers. The shift from ‘employment’ to ‘employability’, and from lifelong education to lifelong learning has transformed the role of the “industrial trainer” (Williams 1961) to an “employability skills trainer” who delivers repetitive employability skills that do not lead to any form of meaningful work or where jobs do not exist in deficient labour market areas. The employability skills trainer is complicit with the status quo in disciplining learners, who are made to feel responsible for their own fate. The trainer colludes with, rather than understanding, the neoliberal politics of the employability skills programmes that aim to socially control those for whom the government does not provide economic investment for job creation.

Community adult education and community development have a significant role to play in engaging the working class who are experiencing increasing social inequalities, and especially those who are marginalised from society, into participating in learning for democracy. In doing so, this will enable the working class to explore what democracy means and what kind of democracy they want to live in. This educational opportunity will provide ways in which the working class can “shape the society within which they live” (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.9). This process will nurture loyalty and a voice within the working class. The model of learning for democracy requires public funding and adult education practitioners who are not restricted by neoliberal governmentality as they need to provide public spaces for critical thinking and dialogue and action if social inequalities are to be made

public. These public spaces to listen to those experiencing social inequalities are missing at community level.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the focus is on an explanation of, and justification for, my research approach and the methods used in the study. Firstly, I briefly discuss epistemology and my research perspective. Secondly, I address the life history method and provide a rationale for my choice of this approach and, thirdly, I explain and describe my sample and the pre-interview stage of preparing and planning semi-structured interviews. The interview process, transcribing of data, and validity of transcripts are also presented and any issues highlighted. In addition, my approach to data analyses, the use of grounded theory and the development of codes, categories and themes are described. This is followed by a discussion and outline of the ethical approach adopted.

#### **Research questions and a qualitative research approach**

What is essential for any research is that the approach taken is coherent with the research questions that the study seeks to answer. My research questions for the overall thesis are as follows:

1. What general impact has de-industrialisation had on four communities in County Durham (from 1972 to the present)?
2. How has adult education changed in response to de-industrialisation in the same communities?
3. What have been the major effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of the learners in the sample from these communities?

4. How has adult education shaped the position, disposition and identity of the learners studied?

5. Does Hirschman's theoretical model of responses to change provide a useful framework for understanding the experience of the adult learners?

The first two research questions are addressed through a critical review of the relevant literature and the final question is answered through a reflexive analysis of the study and the theoretical material that has helped shape and develop it. The main focus of the empirical research, and the methodology which was adopted in this study, answers questions three and four specifically.

I proposed a qualitative research strategy that seeks to understand experience and meaning through the voices of the respondents in the study. This approach would enable me to interact with, hear the voice of, and understand the social reality of learners living in de-industrialised areas. Mottier (2005, p.2) points out:

The practice of qualitative research can be more usefully conceptualized as a form of bricolage: a putting together of a set of research practices that aim to provide a solution to a concrete problem. In other words, the choice of qualitative research techniques depends on the research question that is being asked: it is problem driven rather than method driven.

Qualitative research paradigms are often contrasted with positivism, a paradigm in which objective truth is pursued using quantitative methods of experiments and surveys and where data is statistically analysed. The researcher is focused on goals, outcomes and measurement rather than interaction with research participants that produces meaning. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.5), positivism is focused on testing a hypothesis using scientific methods with "generalizability of findings". I did not wish to test a hypothesis, as I wanted to construct new knowledge through interaction with learners' meanings. The justification for my research was that I wanted to add something new to the literature field as there has been very little written that captures what learners have experienced from the effects of de-industrialisation in the coalfield and rust belt areas of County Durham. Also, I wanted to know if participation in community adult education and government

programmes in de-industrialised areas had changed identities and enabled people to take more control of their lives. In addition, Hirschman's theory has been used as a theoretical framework for business organisations but not local communities, as in this study, so it was important to understand what such categories might mean in this very different context of change. Conducting quantitative research through surveys and questionnaires in disadvantaged communities may produce little response due to issues of literacy and non-participation in civic life, which are characteristics of these communities. The reason why I have chosen a qualitative approach is that it provides the researcher with the opportunity to work in the environment the learners inhabit and to build trust with them by listening to them face to face.

To a certain extent, my approach is congruent with a constructionist approach. As Pring (2004, pp.50-51) notes, the constructionist approach seeks to identify "negotiated" meaning:

Each person lives in a 'world of ideas' and it is through those ideas that the physical and social world is 'constructed'. There is no way that one could step outside this world of ideas to check whether or not they accurately represent a world existing independently of the ideas themselves. Communication with other people, therefore, lies in a 'negotiation' of their respective worlds of ideas whereby, often for practical reasons (they need to live and work together), they come to share the same ideas. A consensus is reached...There are many realities as there are conceptions of it.

It is important to qualify the above, however. Whilst people may experience life differently, there are often common patterns that emerge because of enduring structures which are not easily wished away. Meanings can be 'fixed' through inequalities of power which shape how individuals make sense of their experience and live them out. The meaning of being a welfare claimant, for example, can be fixed by a powerful policy and media discourse that seeks to belittle claimants as unworthy and workshy. Powerful discourses can be internalised so that claimants begin to see themselves in such terms.

Foucault, as translated by Hurley in the chapter on 'The Subject and Power' in the *Essential Works of Foucault* (2000, pp.326-348), rejected the view that people have power which means that they are more or less able to achieve what they want in their relationships with others, and society as a whole. As he points out, power is not possessed; it is exercised by others on others and exists only in action in everyday life (pp.326-330). Foucault sees the state as exercising power to conduct the conduct of others, "conduct of conducts" (p.341). Foucault sees the state within a 16<sup>th</sup> century context where the state did not only refer to "political structures or to the management of states" but stipulated the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups, families and communities should be directed. In order to do this, the state became legally constituted politically and economically and consequently was to subjugate and take action on the lives of its people. Governing in this way is to "structure the possible fields of action of others" (p.341). De-industrialisation and the welfare state have subjected the learners in this study to state power and its methods of social control.

A qualitative approach has to take into account individual meanings and experiences as well as patterns of responses that are not entirely in the control of individuals who have been subjected to the exploitative powers of a dominant state and the discursive power of the media. Hence the qualitative approach was fit for purpose in undertaking my research as it enabled me to have a closer involvement and interaction with learners in order to understand the world through their experiences.

We know very little about the experiences of people who have lived through de-industrialisation so it is essential to record their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2003, pp.4-5) point out that qualitative research involves:

An interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them.

In seeking to enhance understanding rather than seek explanations and causes, my approach to the research was interpretative. For interpretative researchers:

Data are not given observations of external social facts that are independent from the researcher. Rather, interpretative approaches recognise the constructed nature of 'data', which are seen instead as the outcome of a reflexive research process wherein the 'social problems' under investigation are themselves treated not as 'given' but as socially constructed.

(Mottier, 2005, p.4)

As an interpretive researcher, I had concern for the research participants who were sharing their experiences and I needed to understand and work with their interpretations of their world, as this would enable me to build theory and think critically about the theory informing this account. I also needed to understand the experiences of learners across different research sites and compare and contrast them because of their potential impact on helping people make sense of their experience.

Extracting people's experiences has to be framed in active rather than passive terms; the researcher is not simply neutral.

The interactive nature of data collection cannot be adequately considered as a passive extraction of information from participants by the researcher, but rather as a mutual construction of meaning during the data collection.

(Mottier, 2005, p.4).

In this case interaction took place through semi-structured interviews with open questions and validation of transcripts with learners. This research practice can be framed as a form of 'symbolic interaction' where meaning can be explained through the use of symbols, especially through language, that gives meaning to objects. In this case, these were the closure of a steel plant and collieries that were visible objects on the landscape of working class communities in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the effects of these closures and the dismantling of the economic infrastructure on the lives of learners. According to Mottier (2005, p.5):

Meaning is embedded in a specific historical and cultural context, the meaning of the object of research is irreducible to the cultural meanings that envelop the interpreter. It is through language that reality is comprehended; it is only through language, through shared meanings, that social agents give

meaning to their actions; it follows that the nature of meaningful action is fundamentally social.

Woods (1983, pp.15-16) explains his perspective on symbolic interaction:

Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have for them. Humans inhabit two different worlds: the 'natural' world wherein they are organisms of drives and instincts and where the external world exists independently of them, and the social world where the existence of symbols, like language, enables them to give meaning to objects. [Symbolic] interaction implies human beings acting in relation to each other, taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting and acting again. A more dynamic and active human being emerges rather than an actor merely responding to others.

Merrill and West (2009, p.4) argue that symbolic interactionism is based on "pragmatic philosophical" ideas, as knowledge about everyday life is co-constructed by people interacting with each other to make sense of their social reality and environment. In this view social issues and concerns are discussed from the perspective of the individual rather than the system. Through this human encounter, communication through words, gestures and symbols that have a conventional meaning in everyday life are used to understand the subjective experiences of individuals:

By interacting with others, self and society are made through a process of negotiation and interpretation. Meaning is symbolically created through language, developed in interaction with others.

(Merrill and West, 2009, p.60).

Symbolic interactionism fits with my socialist feminist research approach that sees gender and class being constructed through the symbolic as well as material power of a capitalist system. This has created a hierarchy of classes that defines society into those who have value or no value for the economy (Merrill and West, 2009, p.65,

Skeggs, 2013, p.2). In co-constructing knowledge, structure and agency are important to the socialist feminist researcher who seeks to explore the impact of wider structures of inequality on individual subjectivities and to listen to the voice of the marginalised. Using symbolic interactionism with life history methods [outlined in following section] as part of my conceptual framework enabled me to focus at the micro level of past and present lives and how subjectivities are shaped. In taking this approach, the researched are not seen as subordinate to the researcher but have an equal status in co-constructing knowledge. This enabled me to illustrate in the life history stories the relationship between structure and agency and the strengthening or weakening of subjectivity as a consequence of de-industrialisation and adult learning programmes.

Symbolic interactionism is a “practical situated activity...rather than an abstract one...for subjects and researchers” (Merrill and West, 2009, p.60). The symbolic interactionist position enabled me to understand the phenomena of the effects of de-industrialisation through the learners’ experiences and if learning had enabled them to construct a purposeful identity.

To summarise, the constructionist approach that directed my study enabled new knowledge to be made through the prism of individual experience whilst taking account of enduring inequalities which shape meaning. A socialist feminist approach enabled the “voice” of the oppressed to be heard. This interpretivist approach attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena such as de-industrialisation in terms of the meanings people bring from their everyday lives and surroundings. But de-industrialisation was not willed or initiated by the individuals in this study. It began a process of undermining collective experiences, which left people to be authors of their own future but without adequate support or help. In order to make sense of these experiences over a period of time I decided that the most fruitful way to get insights into this would be through a life history approach to data collection.

## **Life history**

### **Theoretical Influences**

The Chicago School influenced the “biographical turn” or “subjectivist turn” to develop a different way of researching to that of the dominant positivist perspective in social research in the US (Chamberlayne et al 2000). Alongside the ‘biographical turn’ came the influence of symbolic interactionism, which also viewed social reality from the perspective of the subject. Merrill and West (2009, pp.59-60) point out that “the theoretical roots of biographical research, for many [researchers] lie in symbolic interactionism ...as it focuses on the subjectivity of the social world and derives understanding from the experience and interpretations of subjects”.

Life history belongs to the family of biographical methods that “rests on subjective and inter-subjectively gained knowledge and understandings of the life experiences of individuals” (Denzin, 1989, p.28). Positivism had denied the importance of human agency and dialogue in research and in doing so the subjective experiences that shaped people’s lives were regarded as insignificant or uninteresting for researchers. Since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the ‘turn’ to anti-positivism, biographical approaches and feminist theory have challenged the “neglect of the human subject” and called for a study of individual subjectivities that valued what people had to say especially those marginalised in society (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). According to Merrill and West (2009) feminism has played a significant role in the “subjectivist turn” in that it has fostered a return of a more humanistic approach in research methods. The importance of a humanistic approach to biography, and for co-constructing a life history in the context of the socio-economic and political time it is placed, has shown how structural forces have shaped experiences of gender, social class and ethnicity (Wright Mills, cited in Merrill and West 2009, p.27). Plummer also argues in favour of a humanistic approach to biographical research taking human beings and their experiences as a base line despite how fractured and problematic this might be (2001, p.262).



My research approach emphasised “intersubjectivity”, building dialogue and a reciprocal relationship with the subject. This theoretical approach has provided me with an understanding of the subjectivity of each learner studied, such as how the subjectivity of the learner was transformed by the effects of de-industrialisation and, even further affected, by the experience of employability programmes. This is in contrast to those whose subjectivity was transformed in more positive ways by attending community adult education. Abbreviated accounts of life stories are found in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The following literature provides a number of further justifications for adopting a life history approach but key to this approach is an emphasis on structure and agency and the constraints of structural forces in shaping individual subjectivities.

Life history is a “retrospective account by the individual of his or her life in whole or in part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited by another person” (Watson and Watson-Frake, 1985, p.2). A life history approach enabled adult learners to “reconstruct their past through narration of their life story...which takes into account their historical context...however the past also influences one’s understanding of the present and one’s ability to articulate and narrate the present” (Biesta et al. 2011, pp.9-10). Life histories can provide evidence of how social and economic structures and the many cultures within which people live can shape and determine their life course (Dollard cited in Goodson, 2010, p.9), which can be seen in the “light of changing patterns of time and space” (Goodson, 2010, p.18). Furthermore, life history focuses on the subjective experience of the learner (Goodson, 2010, p.7) and is an appropriate way in which to come to understand their experiences and views on the effects that de-industrialisation has had on their lives.

By encouraging learners to provide a narrative account of their life history stories, Biesta (2011, p.66) sees learning taking place through this narration process and is a way in which learners may learn about their identity. Polkinghorne (1995, p.5) describes “narrative” as a type of discourse: “the story” was a way of knowing about a life. The life story is the “story we tell about our life” (Goodson, 1992, p.6). Ricoeur (cited in Polkinghorne 1995, p.7) suggests that stories are “linguistic expressions of this uniquely human experience of the connectedness of life” and, for Polkinghorne

(1988, p.36), “narrative recognises the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts in a whole”.

### **Life History in Practice**

In constructing each life history narrative, I took into account Dollard’s (1935, p.8) criteria for a life history narrative, and based each story within:

- a) its cultural context of de-industrialised areas in North East England
- b) the learner’s ‘habitus’ which comprises a set of dispositions which are their tendencies, values and behaviours towards learning, progression and forging a new identity (Bourdieu cited in Biesta et al., 2011, p.87);
- c) the effect of family life in transmitting a culture to the learner;
- d) the social behaviour of the learner in the research interview;
- e) their past experiences of education, (un)employment, and de-industrialisation from childhood to adulthood that have influenced their present thinking and why they have engaged in learning

I set each life history story within a time period, extending from early life to the present day, and set it against a background of the history of de-industrialisation in the area, exploring if adult education has changed to respond to the needs of those living in de-industrialised communities. The unit of analysis in this research project is in the form of each life history story as they represent the past and present lives of individual learners and their experiences.

- a) Life history is always the history of a life, “a single life”, told from a particular vantage point. It is about reflecting upon a life and making meaning of a person’s life. (Lincoln cited in Hatch and Wisniewski, 2003, p.115).
- b) Life history is composed of a self-reflected story through which the author and narrator (the learner) jointly construct the identity of a unique individual “historically situated in time, culture and place” (Chin cited in Hatch, 2003, p.115)

- c) Life histories are stories of people's lives, they are narratives, but it is the connection of one's life events to social events that distinguishes life history from other forms of narrative. The life is seen being lived in a time, place, and social circumstance, rather than a simple event (Schempp cited in Hatch, 2003, p.115)
- d) The distinction between life history as a method and narrative as a method is that life history takes narrative "one step further" as life history places narrative accounts "beyond the personal" and within a broader context of the historical, social, institutional and political (Cole cited in Hatch, 2003, p.116).
- e) Life history is also distinguished from other types of qualitative research as it focuses on the individual and understanding individual lives. Data for the life history method has to be collected by the researcher interacting with the narrator (the learner), thus the material for life history comes directly from the narrator. (Michelle Foster cited in Hatch, 2003, p.130).
- f) Life history enables us to focus on central moments, critical incidents, and fateful moments that we value. It gives greater sense and process to a life and gives a more ambiguous, complex and chaotic view of reality. It also presents a more "rounded" and believable character than the "flat" seemingly irrational and linear character from other forms of qualitative inquiry (Sparks cited in Hatch, 2003, p.130).
- g) Life history and narrative go beyond the "scientific" or "empirical" research, as it is "person centred", with an emphasis on "subjectivity" (Ayers cited in Hatch, 2003, p.124).
- h) Life history is "always without exception phenomenological and naturalistic" (Lincoln cited in Hatch, 2003, p.124).
- i) Life History and narrative have the desire to give a "voice" to those in communities and challenge official stories. (Munro cited in Hatch, 2003, p. 125). However, Goodson (1992, p.6) points out that life history must be located in a social, historical, and political context to avoid the trap of disempowering those we seek to empower.

- j) Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p.425) state, “As researchers we cannot work with participants without sensing the fundamental human connection among us”.

As a socialist feminist, taking a life history approach to data collection was compatible with a qualitative research strategy that was interpretative and used symbolic interactionism in the construction of meaning during data collection.

New knowledge could be constructed through meanings that learners attached to their experiences. It had a focus on the individual where each single life could be reflected upon and meaning made of that person’s life through the production of life stories. All respondents in my sample had lived experiences surrounding the phenomena of de-industrialisation, which was the extraordinary dismantling of the local economic infrastructure and much more besides. Life history narratives are situated within a broader context than the narrative method, which are just personal accounts. Life history narratives are historically situated in time, culture and place and under particular social circumstances. This fits with my study which is historically situated in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in County Durham, which was made up of industrial working-class communities that were dependent on coal and steel production and experienced de-industrialisation.

Life history methods also give voice to the disempowered, which was key to undertaking this study as voices from these communities are little heard. It enabled me, as a researcher, to construct stories with the narrator (the learner) within the local historical and socio-economic context to investigate the effects of de-industrialisation and if government programmes and community adult education were shaping their position, disposition and identity. According to Harnett (2010, pp.163-164) “where you happen to have been born in the world has a tremendous consequence for the life you might want to lead and the opportunities open to you...places are significant in life histories that are narrated”.

In practical terms, I met with each learner on two occasions: once to collect life history data and once to validate the data. I recorded interviews on an audiotape and then transcribed them (Silverman 2003, p.229). Crang and Cook (cited in Bold, 2012, p.130) recommend a rigorous and systematic approach through the grounded theory method for narratives. Grounded theory is known as “bottom up” or “inductive reasoning” (Charmaz, 2011, p.103). It enables us to generate ideas from the data, look for patterns and relationships across the data, and then progress from the data and observation to build theory (not test a hypothesis). Secondary data analysis was conducted through methods identified in Saldana’s (2009) *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. I was guided by this manual in identifying the codes, categories and themes from fourteen life history stories. This is discussed in depth later in this chapter. In the following section I explain how I came to identify my sample through “purposive and theoretical sampling” (Silverman, 2001, pp.250 - 254).

### **Research sample**

The sample of learners I hoped to engage in the research were those of thirty-years plus who had returned to some form of adult learning for a minimum of two years and were currently participating in a learning programme(s). The requirement of a minimum of two years participation in community adult education is due to Crosson et al. (2003, p.63) informing us of the “fragility of adult learners’ identities, and the uncertain nature of the learners’ careers resulting from differing circumstances”. Their participation in this provision over the years may have been discontinuous or continuous. They would also have been born into what was once an industrial community and would be able to talk on the subject of the effects of de-industrialisation on their lives. They would have no, or low level, qualifications and might have moderate literacy difficulties. The sample was to be made up of 50% men and 50% women to have equal representation from both genders to inform the study. The reason why I chose a thirty-years plus age group for this sample is that they are more likely than a younger age group to have experienced the process of industrial decline.

My approaches to sampling were identified as “purposive and theoretical sampling” which are often treated as synonyms (Silverman, 2001, pp.250 -254). “Purposive sampling” is about thinking critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choosing our sample case carefully on this basis (p.250). Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.202) point out that:

Many qualitative researchers employ...purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings, and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur.

Qualitative research follows a theoretical rather than a statistical approach as theoretical sampling has more to do with generating theories than with empirical generalisation. Bryman (1988, p.90) points out “the issue should be couched in terms of the generalisability of cases to theoretical propositions rather than to populations”.

Mason (1996, pp.93-94) argues that theoretical sampling is about choosing cases in terms of your theory:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position...and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds certain characteristics or criteria which help and test your theory.

I needed to obtain a sample of learners for whom exit, loyalty and voice (Hirschman, 1970) had meaning for them within the context of their lives in de-industrialised communities. I needed to construct new knowledge with the learners on how they had reacted to this economic crisis in the past and the present, and also if this socio-economic situation had encouraged them to depart (exit) their communities for work elsewhere or, alternatively, had encouraged loyalty to remain and fight back against the status quo and rebuild their community.

Silverman (2001, pp.252-254) claims that theoretical sampling has three key features: (1) choosing cases in terms of your theory whereby research participants are able to respond to research questions that enable the researcher to develop theory (2) choosing deviant cases as it makes sense to seek out negative instances as defined by the theory one is working with (3) changing the size of the sample during your research as qualitative research allows for flexibility in its design.

Purposive and theoretical sampling enabled me to take the following approach to identify a sample for my study.

#### **a) Strategic Approach**

The plan was to engage a sample of learners through Community Adult Education providers based in de-industrialised areas across North East England where socio-economic and health inequalities are high (see chapter 1 Appendices 1,2,3&4 County Durham in NEE Statistics). These are places of poverty and deprivation and where people become disconnected from each other, and where unemployment and low income impact upon an individual's quality of life (Joseph Rowntree Trust cited in Catell, 2011, p.4).

My first approach, in 2014, was to demonstrate fairness to all the de-industrialised areas by writing to Lifelong Strategic Lead Officers in local authorities across the region. The aim was to invite them to engage local providers whom they funded. Each invitation was customised for different local authority areas and followed up with telephone calls. When this strategy did not prove successful I arranged to meet with a regional Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), Education Manager who co-ordinated Community Adult Education across the region. This manager was most enthusiastic that her organisation engaged in the research project and arranged a meeting on my behalf with a group of local learning co-ordinators from across the region. There was no expression of interest from these local learning co-ordinators in the research project.

After the second strategic approach had not proved successful, I focused on contacting providers in the west end and east end of the City of Newcastle by telephone. These inner city areas had high levels of deprivation and inequality since de-industrialisation had closed the heavy engineering factories and shipbuilding on the River Tyne. They also housed increasing numbers of ethnic minority people, who were refugees and asylum seekers and people from Eastern Europe. A white, long-term unemployed population still lived in these de-industrialised communities, where the voluntary sector had a strong presence in order to sustain community cohesion. One VCS agency on the riverside informed me they would engage with the research on condition that I provide a £40 ASDA food voucher for a Romanian family who had 10 children. I was unsure of the ethics surrounding such an exchange of goods. Given that the VCS sector and its learners were experiencing considerable financial loss due to austerity measures, I negotiated that after I had conducted a research interview I would provide a food voucher. The interview yielded rich data and I handed over a £40 ASDA food voucher which I thought to be for a good cause.

This riverside VCS project was just over the river from County Durham, which had experienced massive de-industrialisation of its coal and steel industries (Robinson, 2002, pp.317-334). My plan was to then focus on this one county, where I had been born and had worked in community adult education myself. I made initial telephone contact with local providers who I knew to be delivering learning activities to learners who had experienced the effects of de-industrialisation both past and present. At the time of contact these providers were experiencing severe budget cuts due to austerity measures and a reduction in their community adult education budget.

Overall, these significant changes made it difficult to engage with a full sample of community adult learners. At this point I decided to undertake a cross comparison study of community adult learners and employability skills programme learners. I engaged with a local college of further education and a local authority training for work unit as they both funded the Employability Skills Programme in County Durham. They enabled me to engage with two of these providers, one based in the coalfield area and the other in the rust belt, for the study. Learners attending these



programmes would have experienced the harsh effects of de-industrialisation as they would be long-term unemployed and have low level or no qualifications. Through the oral tradition they would have been passed down memories of colliery and steel work closures, but be experiencing the long-term effects of these closures in the present. Taking this approach would enable me to compare and contrast my findings from the two Employability Skills Programmes with three, small Community Adult Education projects that still existed in and on the perimeter of the coalfield area. I also engaged a VCS Community Adult Education provider in the rust belt area who was interested in recruiting learners for the study. However, most learners were claiming welfare benefits and opposition to the interviews from Job Centre Plus led to the project withdrawing their learners from the planned life history interviews. I did not encounter this problem in any other area of the county where learners were claiming welfare benefits. The research project was also promoted to an ethnic minority community via a women's ethnic minority project, but participation in the project was declined

## **b) The providers**

The following provides a summary of each community education and training provider who engaged in the research project. On entering all of these providers' premises the researcher immediately observed that one had entered the social world of the working class poor.

**The Anna Project** is an award-winning not-for-profit organisation based in the former North West Durham coalfield area. The project is to be found in a secluded back street of the town centre in a building that, in the past, was a funeral parlour. The project was initially part of a VCS women's project that was established in the 1980s to address the needs of women in the North East. The North East project was closed down in 2012 due to austerity measures that contributed to budget cuts to the VCS. Activists from the market town's women's learning centre re-opened this centre when alternative funds were found later in 2012. This is a 'women only'

learning centre and is the only learning provision dedicated to women in County Durham. It has a strong ethos, encouraging women to make a valuable contribution to the community through volunteering or paid work. It delivers both informal and formal learning with an emphasis on confidence building, social history of women's role models, health and wellbeing and mental health, as well as arts and crafts and IT. Once women have gained in confidence, skills training for working in the community such as listening, counselling and mentoring are provided and women are encouraged to work within the project to support other women through one to one or group work. An emotional wellbeing group, listening service, bereavement group, reading group and drop in sessions are all facilitated by women who have been educated through the centre. This is a safe space for women to learn and share their concerns collectively and help to rebuild the lives of other women. Most women attending this provision have experienced the effects of de-industrialisation through poor mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, patriarchal oppression and long term unemployment. Referrals come from a wide range of social care organisations and women also may self-refer. The provider works with a wide range of partners to support learners who have health, mental health and socio-economic difficulties, including the need for decent housing and food provision through food banks.

**The Social Project** is found in a community centre that in recent years was regenerated by the local authority to serve the needs of a former rural colliery village. Community learning activities are delivered by a range of external providers who visit the centre. Initially the centre employed a Learning Co-ordinator to engage with providers who could deliver learning activities to meet the identified needs of the local community. This role also promoted learning opportunities to the community and encouraged and engaged local residents in registering for courses. Due to austerity measures this dedicated role has been lost and volunteers are relied upon to undertake these duties. The loss of the co-ordinator has brought about a significant reduction in those attending courses but especially amongst younger adults who experience intergenerational unemployment and need to be re-engaged and socially included through learning opportunities. This community centre has now been legally devolved

from the local authority to the centre's Management Committee to fund, sustain and service. Due to budget cuts by the local authority, this centre requested I donate £80 for room hire to interview local learners. I negotiated £40 to enable access to the centre.

**The Hope Project** is to be found in one of the most deprived areas on the River Tyne. The project is housed in a pre-First World War building that was constructed to provide a public library for industrial workers and their families. Since de-industrialisation of the area, the building has been handed over by the local authority to this VCS learning and health project that now serves a multicultural community. The project focuses on social inclusion, integration and community cohesion by encouraging participation from both the white long-term unemployed and immigrant community to engage in advice, guidance and learning. Many of the immigrant community are asylum seekers and refugees, and Eastern Europeans. Participants receive advice on health, welfare, housing, finance, schools, and community services. It encourages digital inclusion through IT sessions that support learners to complete forms for welfare benefits and jobs online, find cheaper energy supplier rates, and the management of money through credit unions. It encourages conversation classes to improve English-speaking skills. It offers a range of social care courses, on Safeguarding, Lifting and Handling, First Aid, Paediatric First Aid and Food Hygiene. It trains women volunteers through its 'Staying Afloat Resilience' course to support women. The project has established an International Women's Group who share experiences and learn about each other's culture. Taking this approach is preventative as it provides individuals with what they need to know when living in difficult times. It works with a wide range of partners from the VCS and public sector, the NHS, Sure Start and food banks to meet the health, mental health, socio-economic, housing and food requirements of its learners.

**The Pit Wheel Project** was established in 1989 as a local community project run by volunteers in an attempt to offer a range of community education, training and support activities for disadvantaged residents of East Durham affected by the closure

of the coal mines. Its main focus in its early days of delivery was on community education but due to changes in funding requirements which now emphasise learning for the economy this provider's emphasis is now on training for work. This small project has grown over twenty-eight years from a small volunteer organisation to the establishment of a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and a social enterprise that employs almost forty local people.

Geographically this provider is found in an isolated spot in a de-industrialised factory in the former East Durham coalfield on the edges of Howden, which was once a vibrant colliery village. This area has a high level of multiple deprivation due to high unemployment, low levels of income, poor health and mental health, and people with no or a low level of qualifications and poor literacy and numeracy compared to the national averages.

As you travel into this area you notice there are many disused factories that have remained empty since de-industrialisation. My first impressions on entering this building were that it was still a factory as it upcycles furniture and white goods as part of its education and training practice with learners, who undertake training and work experience in conditions that are reminiscent of a workhouse. The building is full of local people from this deprived local area who are coerced by Job Centre Plus to attend this local provider's government programme. The provider works with a wide range of social agencies to support its learners who have health, mental health and socio-economic problems including housing issues, and the need for provision of food through food banks.

This provider is currently funded by the Employability Skills Programme through a partnership arrangement with a local college. Tutors deliver a range of employability skills programmes including literacy and numeracy. Courses last from 3 days to 3 months, depending upon the status and previous learning of the learner. Learners are referred by Job Centre Plus, other employability training providers, the Careers Service and the Probation Service. Some learners after the completion of a successful employability programme may be offered employment with the social enterprise where they can undertake NVQs in a range of topics such as Fork Lift Truck Driving.

A key aspect of this provider's work has been to establish a household reuse scheme within its district. In doing so it recruits unemployed residents through agencies and provides training in furniture restoration and upcycling. Furniture upcycling, is also known as 'creative reuse' and is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, or unwanted products into new products. This is of environmental value as it diverts waste from landfill. It also creates low-waged, flexible jobs within this social enterprise for local people. Low-cost, recycled household products are sold to local residents on low incomes in this deprived area. The proceeds are reinvested in the charity to create more jobs within the social enterprise.

**The Iron Project** was established by a District Council in the 1980s as a response to high levels of unemployment due to the closure of the steel works. In 2010 the district council was assimilated into the unitary council of Durham County Council and so too was this training project. It is directly funded to deliver government employability programmes by Durham County Council. The project is to be found in a new fabricated building on an industrial estate in an area of multiple deprivation due to high unemployment, low levels of income, poor health and mental health, and people with no or a low level of qualifications and poor literacy and numeracy skills compared to the national average. This area has never recovered from the closure of the steel works and although there are small pockets of growth emerging in the retail sector and service industries such as cafes and bars, it is all low-waged, insecure work.

As this provider works directly to the Council's Regeneration Team, which seeks to bring new employers into the area, the provider delivers bespoke employability skills training that will meet the needs of employers and not the learners. This is underpinned, where appropriate, with literacy and numeracy and IT skills. The learner is then progressed to an interview for a low-waged, insecure job that they have received training for. Learners are referred by Job Centre Plus on to this programme and the provider is contracted to place learners into a job within six months. The provider recognised that many learners arriving at this provision from Job Centre Plus have many difficulties and barriers that prevent them from entering

the labour market within 6 months. The provider offers them first steps learning to increase their confidence and to obtain attitudinal change by engaging them with employability skills training. The provider works with a range of outside agencies to provide support to learners with learning, emotional, mental health and socio-economic difficulties.

To summarise, these providers have undergone significant funding changes in the recent years due to the emphasis on learning for the economy and cuts to the community education budgets that have changed the curriculum to one of employability and narrow vocational training rather than one of personal development. Those who have taken government employability programme funding have responsibility for finding work for their learners in communities that have had little economic investment since de-industrialisation occurred. For providers rather than Job Centre Plus to have responsibility for placement into jobs is an uphill struggle due to the lack of investment and in many cases impossible given the learning and health difficulties faced by many individuals. It also shows the changing nature of the use of buildings in order to deliver learning to communities: from funeral parlour to Women's Learning Centre, from disused factory to 'Community Reuse and Training Enterprise', from library to Health and Learning Project, and a rebuilt community centre in a former colliery village. Due to the effect of austerity measures and welfare reform changes to benefits on learners there has been an increasing need for providers to engage with a wide range of social care partners from health, and mental health to housing and food banks, and many more. The providers signpost or refer their learners to these agencies for appropriate support.

### **c) Providers' meetings**

In establishing a relationship with this group of five providers through telephone contact and providers' meetings, I issued them with an invitation to participate in the project. I had also prepared the following documents for their comment: Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6), Informed Consent Statement (Appendix 7) and

Interview Guide (Appendix 8), which outlined potential questions for the interviews that I would hold with the learners. Lengthy discussion took place around these documents before it was agreed that all interviews would take place in a quiet space on providers' premises, as learners were familiar with a community venue that was less formal than an institutional building. According to Talmage (cited in Gubrium et al., 2001, p.298), formal settings for interviews can be "threatening for those whose lifestyle does not include such environments". Amendments were made by providers to the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6) and Interview Guide (Appendix 8) to make them more user-friendly before circulation to prospective research participants. All five providers engaged with the study and promoted the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6) within their projects. In doing so they encouraged learners to initially meet me either individually or in groups on their premises to discuss the wider implications of the research.

#### **d) Initial meetings with learners**

Firstly, my aim was to build trust with the learners, as this was essential in engaging learners for interview. Secondly, these meetings had an ethical content in discussing the roles and responsibility of the researcher and the learner in the research process. I took a very informal approach to these meetings. I introduced myself as a local woman who had been born in their area and had worked locally for many years in adult learning, and that since retiring I had become a student and the aim of my research was to investigate the implications of de-industrialisation on adult learners. I wanted to know if learning activities helped them to make changes in their lives such as finding work or becoming a volunteer. I also informed them I was not from the government as I funded my own studies. I explained that I wanted to listen to their life history stories so that the little-heard voices from these communities could inform the study. I negotiated the use of audiotapes to collect their life histories and there was no opposition to this. I explained they would be given the opportunity to approve their transcript and timeline and make changes where required. I explained the Informed Consent Statement (Appendix 7) and how they could withdraw from the research at any time or refuse to answer a question to which they did not wish to

respond. I explained that confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed if they came forward to be interviewed; how their stories would become anonymised through data analysis; and how the research would be stored safely and confidentially within the University of Edinburgh.

In these initial meetings the learners stated that it was not necessary to keep their anonymity in participating in the research from other members of their group or project staff. Taking a more collective rather than an individual approach to the research was a way in which they felt more empowered in having their voices heard. They did agree to being interviewed individually rather than in a focus group discussion and that their stories would be anonymised. In total, I engaged and interviewed 16 working class learners and chose 14 out of the 16 for my study who had fully responded to the research questions (Appendix 9 Transcription Record). No research participants have withdrawn from this study.

Only one of the five providers had engaged black and ethnic minority learners and these learners did not fit the criteria for the study as they were recent immigrants who were asylum seekers, refugees and Eastern Europeans who had not experienced the effects of de-industrialisation in North East England. All other providers were based in white, working class, rural areas of County Durham where 1.2 % of the population is black and ethnic minority (Durham Area Action Partnership Statistical Profile 2012, p.8). There were no black and ethnic minority learners engaged in learning with these providers at the time of engaging research participants in the study. This was reason for no participation by this group in the study.

I changed the sample size from 16 to 14, with six women and eight men, to inform the study. Six men were engaged from two government Employability Skills Programmes and a further two men and six women were engaged from three community adult education projects. I withdrew two potential participants for the following reason. Two men in their very late eighties who had lived the socio-



economic history of de-industrialisation had heard about the research project and had come forward to give their life history; however, they had not engaged in community adult education and for this reason they did not fit the criteria for this sample and would be unable to answer all of the research questions. One learner was a postgraduate with an M.A. in Gaming for Digital Enterprises who was attending the Employability Skills Programme and expressed an interest in becoming a research participant. He had been unable to find work for more than five years but was above the qualification requirement for the sample. I chose to include him in the study as a 'deviant case' as a comparison with those who had no qualifications. Another learner had moved into the area from an affluent area in the south of the country. He had had a lifetime of unskilled work but since moving north more than three years previously he had been unable to find work. I chose to engage him in the study also as a 'deviant case', as he was an outsider who until now had not experienced the effects of de-industrialisation and, despite his considerable experience in the world of work, his learning experiences were not helping him to find work. Twelve other learners fitted the sample criteria as they had been born in an industrial area; had experienced the ongoing effects of de-industrialisation; had no or low level qualifications; and had participated in learning for two years or more.

In the following section I describe the preparation I undertook before data collection could take place.

#### **e) The pre-interview stage**

##### **(1) Preparation for interviews**

Prior to the interviews I attended the Conducting Research Interviews course at the University of Edinburgh. As I had not planned to conduct a pilot interview with a participant from my sample, I thought it necessary to conduct a practice interview in a conducive learning environment where I could receive feedback on my

interviewing skills and reflect on my practice. This course enabled me to study and reflect on who I was as a research interviewer (the self) and the vulnerability of the research participant (the other). I identified with socialist feminist research for the reasons presented below.

## **(2) A Feminist Research Approach to Interviews**

Feminist researchers have paid particular attention to interviewing and its potential for empowerment and “not exploitation” as they see the interview as a learning experience for the researched and also the researcher (Reinharz cited in Merrill and West 2009, p.29). In doing so they strive to build more equal and democratic relationships so that the interview becomes more like a conversation. In challenging the practice of treating the researched not as subordinates but as equals in co-constructing knowledge this provided a subjective understanding of the life experiences of the researched. As Rustin (cited in Chamberlayne et al 2000, p.41) points out, “the subject is closer to the truth about his/her life than the researcher can ever be”.

Using semi-structured interviews in life history methodology also enabled me to place a subject’s life within a historical, socio-economic and political context. Wright Mills (1967), in recognising the importance of a humanistic approach to collecting data through biographical methods, pointed out the approach of placing a life within its context forges a meeting point between structure and agency (Wright Mills cited in Merrill and West, 2009, p.27). In this encounter, constraints through structural forces that impact upon individual subjectivities can find meaning. The feminist research interview can enable ordinary people (especially women) to have a “voice” that has been suppressed and kept “hidden from history” or only allowed into social research if “spoken for by others” (Wengraf, cited in Chamberlayne et al 2000, p.140)).

Feminist research recognises the importance of the researcher’s reflexivity as the researcher’s presence is always there, throughout the research, beginning with

identifying the problem to be researched, to being the catalyst for research interviews where knowledge is constructed to validation of that knowledge and in analysing conceptual themes (Merrill and West 2009, p.115). The text below shows how I put into practice the theory informing my approach.

Through my practice interview I learnt to recognise that the interviewee can do nothing to change their level of subject knowledge at the interview and therefore may feel a sense of failure. It was therefore important in my approach to sampling that I identified research participants who had the subject knowledge to respond to the research questions. I also learnt the importance of developing an “active interview” that seeks to co-construct knowledge between the researcher and interviewee through developing a joint conversation rather than an “instrumental dialogue” (Kvale, 2006, p.484), where the researcher takes a hierarchical position to the interviewee and is just obtaining answers to research questions. Such an approach does not create a dialogue between two equals but subordinates the interviewee. It was my aim when conducting research interviews with my sample to conduct ‘active interviews’ and create a safe and supportive environment for my interviewee to talk.

Roulston (2010, p.116) contends that, “knowing oneself as a researcher and articulating one’s place and involvement in research” is essential to conducting qualitative research. All researchers are positioned by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstance and intellectual predisposition (Chiseri-Strater cited in Roulston, 2010, p.115). When conducting the research, I therefore, needed to be aware of my ‘identity’ – for example how my social and cultural background and temporal status shapes my disposition, or inherent qualities and attitudes towards myself and others. For Bourdieu (cited in Biesta et al., 2011, p.24) “identity is to do with one’s sense of self” and how one sees oneself in the world, for who we are permeates our dispositions towards our life and surroundings. In doing so, I should be able to take into account the needs of my research interviewees as I come from the same working class communities in which both they and I were born and raised. This is all part of what is known as ‘reflexivity

in research' whereby the researcher is challenged to be "more fully conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of those we study" (Hertz, 1997, p.viii).

Reflexivity is not only about the 'self' that the researcher brings to the field and what they know. Reflexivity is also the ongoing conversation between the researcher interviewer and the interviewee, and how the researcher interviewer has come to know what they know and how they have constructed and interpreted that knowledge. According to Avis (cited in Bondi, 2002, p.205), the "practice of reflexivity is one that attempts explicitly to link the idea of the self to the process of knowledge construction". Each interview has a structure and a purpose. However, according to Holstein et al. (2004, p.141), they see an:

Interview as a social encounter in which knowledge is actively constructed...a site for producing reportable knowledge...where both parties to the interview...are unavoidably active...the participants are not so much repositories of knowledge awaiting excavation...they are constructors of knowledge in association with interviewers.

Both the interviewer and the interviewee have subject knowledge. Qualitative researcher interviewers within their research design establish criteria for the sample involved in their study so that subject knowledge can be obtained. According to Holstein et al. (2004, p.144), by projecting a "subject behind the respondent", this gives an epistemological perspective (ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of multiple realities) and the knowledge that is produced counts as valid and acceptable ways of knowing. The interviewee becomes no longer a vessel of opinions and emotions but a source of knowledge.

Throughout any interview knowledge is stimulated by the researcher guiding the interview through relevant questions pertaining to 'what'. The responses of participants are further developed through probing by the interviewer to obtain more depth of knowledge or questions pertaining to 'how'. However, if interviews are "active" and a two-way conversation develops, then researchers need to pay equal

attention to “how” knowledge is produced in interviews as well as “what” is being asked and conveyed (Holstein et al., 2004, p.142).

In conducting an active interview, the interviewer is an active listener, where listening involves making sense of sounds and words both during and after the interview at the transcription and analysis stages. Rubin (2005, p.14) refers to the “active interviewee” as the “conversational partner”, each of whom is unique and who shapes the discussion and guides what path the research should take.

Participating in an active interview allows the interviewer to conduct a less rigid interview and to engage in a conversation around a topic with the interviewee. This two-way conversation gives way to the interviewee not only formulating responses to the research topic but also talking of their everyday experiences (Holstein et al., 2004, p.154).

The above approach fits with socialist feminist research as one of its principles is not for the researcher to subordinate the subject. According to Hooks (cited in Rubins, 2004, p.26), feminist researchers use a loosely structured research methodology that allows people to “talk back”. In feminist research interviews are “reciprocal dialogues” and when “failures are exposed” by the interviewee, the interviewer can place such failures within socio-economic/political contexts (Sinding and Aronson, 2003, p.115). For me, the fusion of a feminist research approach and an active interviewer is something I wanted to achieve in order to co-construct knowledge. This interview approach fitted with my constructionist and symbolic interactionism epistemology. However, I am mindful of Kvale’s view that the interview is “not an open and dominance free dialogue between egalitarian partners” as the interviewer sets the interview in motion due to their research interests. Also it is “not a conflict and power free zone” (Kvale, 2006, pp.483-485).

### **(3) The planning of semi-structured interviews.**

I would be conducting research interviews with learners who mostly had a similar heritage to myself, and the subject knowledge to respond to my research questions. However, Douglas (cited in Holstein et al 2004, p.147) points out that not only are research participants “repositories of answers...but well-guarded vessels of feelings”. Qualitative research provides the opportunity for a less structured approach to interviewing as it does not adopt a fixed set of questions devised in advance and from which there can be no deviation once the interview proceeds. It also allows for more flexibility in changing direction if required, thus enabling the investigation to explore other routes or ways of thinking about the phenomena being researched (Bryman, 2004, p.287).

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to allow me to “explore issues, personal life histories, and what is meaningful to, or valued by, participants, how they feel about particular issues, how they look at particular issues, their attitudes, opinions and emotions” (Newby, 2010, pp.243-4). This allows the participants’ responses to dictate the direction of the interview, and it also allows the researcher to probe issues that may arise. Gillham (2005, p.32) points out that “the most sensitive probes are not questions at all, more like forms of responsive encouragement”. The researcher uses open-ended questions such as ‘tell me?’ and uses prompts throughout the interview to guide it to a positive conclusion by asking positive questions. By using this method with audiotapes I hoped to capture the nature and social reality of the participants.

While Wilson (1993 cited in Cattell, 2011, p.17) points out that, “poverty can cause feelings of powerlessness and low esteem”; for some participants in these cases it was also accompanied by mild depression and anxiety. It was therefore vital for me to ensure that the research questions fitted their experiences and were addressed in language that they understood. The manner in which I presented, pitched and paced the questions was crucial if data was to be received from their perspective and in their own language. If incomprehensible or irrelevant questions were asked this

might cause not just a loss of relevant data but also a loss of the participant from the project. It was important to me as a researcher that the participant left the interview feeling it was a positive experience.

To ensure the reliability of the semi-structured interviews I followed Silverman's (2003, p.229) guidelines. He recommends that all face-to-face interviews are audio recorded and then transcribed. The benefit of audiotaping is that it enabled me to give my full attention to the learner and the direction that the interview was taking. This is often difficult to detect when conducting interviews where one is also transcribing. By transcribing these interviews at a later stage, I would have the opportunity to study in depth the views that the learner had expressed before I moved to coding and interpreting the data.

In my approach to sampling I had identified the venues where the interviews would take place, and the interview guide, with potential research questions, had been designed in collaboration with the providers (Appendix 8). The aim of the research, the ethical issues, and confidentiality and anonymity had been discussed at initial meetings with learners. There had been no opposition to the use of audio recordings of their life histories as they had been informed they would be issued with a copy of the transcript and timeline to validate at a future meeting. The informed consent statement had been issued to learners to return if they wished to go ahead with an interview. A minimum of seven days was given for them to consider if they wished to go ahead with the interview. The interview schedule is outlined in Appendix 9 (Transcription and Validation Record). It was important to arrange the interviews as soon as possible after the initial meetings especially with Employability Skills Programme learners as they are moved regularly between different provision and welfare, and may become difficult to contact.

In the next section I describe the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment within which data collection can take place through interviews and audio recordings with participants.

#### **f) The interviews**

Fourteen life history research interviews were conducted. I validated twelve of the interview transcripts by returning to meet with the learners in their community centres. A further two transcripts were validated by telephone and electronic communication. This process took place throughout a four-month period.

Quiet spaces were provided for interviews in community venues. One of my aims at the interview was to continue to build on the trust already established and to have empathy with the learners and to enter and understand the world from their perspective. Empathy, according to Bondi (2014, p.51), is part of “counter transference”, which is the feelings we have towards our interviewee. Bondi (2014, p.51) argued empathy is a “process in which one person imaginatively enters the experiential world of another”; however, she also recognises that empathy entails “acknowledging that the effort to understand can only ever yield an imperfect grasp of what the other feels” (Bondi, 2014, p.51).

At the beginning of each interview I addressed any issues or concerns that they had. I made sure all Employability Skills Programme learners were participating on a voluntary rather than a mandatory basis. As they were welfare claimants, who may have been concerned about a loss of benefits if they did not participate, I reassured them that the research study was not aligned in any way to the government’s welfare to work system. I made all learners aware that they could stop the interview at any time without reason or not answer a question if they found that the past resonated in the present with an emotional memory they would find difficult to discuss. Also, they could withdraw from the research interview at any time. The outcome of this approach was that they were enthusiastic to give their life history story as most brought to my attention that no one had asked them for this in the past and no one had listened to their story.



Each interview lasted between one and two hours. The ethical arrangements I had made to use 'stop cards' or turn off the audiotape to stop the interview if the research participant became stressed did not have to be applied in any of these interviews. One participant was uncomfortable with back pain throughout the interview and I asked if he would like me to stop the interview but he requested that it continued. There was no requirement at the initial meetings with individual learners or on receiving the informed consent statement or throughout the research interview to use the red and green cards to assist those who may have had moderate literacy difficulties. This came later, as strategies had to be put in place at the validation of transcripts and timelines for two learners who had reading difficulties.

The interview guide (Appendix 8) was useful as a conversation guide to open up each interview, however, learners often openly volunteered the information before I got to the question. Where appropriate, I used probes such as "can you tell me more about that?" (Gillham, 2005, p.32) in order to clarify or generate more information in the process of constructing new knowledge (Gillham, 2005, p.32). Probes also helped me draw out what was not being said; "the astute interviewer will listen both to what the respondent is saying and to what is not being said" (Talmage cited in Gubrium et al, 2001, p.303).

The audiotapes enabled me to actively listen to learners in face to face interviews. They also enabled me to focus on body language, facial expressions and use of language, repeating of certain words, initial themes emerging from the stories and to look for any signs of stress in the learners. In becoming an active listener and conducting an active interview, a two-way conversation encourages the interviewee not only to respond to research questions but also to talk of their everyday socio-economic experiences, their health and mental health, and issues of concern in their local area. Bondi (2014, p.48) argues the building of rapport, which is essentially about trust in the interview process, can be communicated through "active listening" and "non-verbal communication". Bondi refers to this as "receptive unconsciousness".

All interviews flowed in conversation to their natural ending and all participants agreed to a time and date for the next interview stage, where their transcript and timeline would be validated. There were no incidents within the interview process when the audiotape was recording. However, one male learner remained after the interview to express racist remarks on immigrants obtaining jobs when he was unemployed.

As soon as time allowed I reflected on each interview, on what I thought went well and what may not have gone well. I identified key points of the interview conversation and if there were any similarities or differences from other interviews. I considered whether there been an equal balance of power between the researcher and the learner for an active interview to have taken place. I did not seek permission from the research participants to write these notes, as it is good practice in research to keep such a record. I have kept the notes securely and confidential to myself. I was able to read them before transcribing the interviews verbatim.

In the following section I explain the process for transcribing data.

#### **g) Transcribing data**

The process of analysis is both iterative and retrospective (Bold, 2012, p.121). I began my analysis by clarifying and interpreting the responses given by my research participants. To prepare raw data for coding I began by transcribing all interviews from oral to written language in the form of narrative. The narratives were chronological life histories that captured the personal experiences of learners and examined whether participation in learning had contributed to structuring a meaningful identity.

This is a small-scale study and so I used ‘Word’ not ‘NVivo’ software to store the transcripts (Basil, 2003, p.143). A detailed explanation of my reasons for not using

NVivo is found in the next section on data analysis strategy. According to Kvale (2007, p.92) “transcription is an interpretative process as the translation from the oral to the written involves a series of judgements and decisions”. I questioned if I should produce verbatim transcriptions as according to Kvale (2007, p.92) attempts at verbatim transcriptions produce “hybrids”. It is, therefore, important for the researcher to keep in mind that oral conversations and written text are “linguistically different discourses and their divergence should be kept in mind when transcribing”. I did separate the transcription into interviewer and participant otherwise I would have lost continuity with the text and any theoretical understandings it might convey.

As a new researcher I asked myself what was useful for my own research purposes. This was to transcribe my interviews ‘verbatim’ and not to selectively transcribe. According to Ross (2010, p.3) “selective transcribing has its own difficulties as decisions have to be made as to what one may deliberately leave out and as such the voice of the participant may be lost”. I included in the transcripts all emotional expressions and silences as these would help me recall social interactions that took place throughout the interview. By transcribing my own audiotapes, the interview became alive once more.

To confirm the reliability of the transcript, I listened again to the tape to identify any discrepancies. As transcripts are interpretative constructions by the researcher of the given social reality of their research participant, the next step was to proceed to meet with the participants to validate their transcriptions. According to Cohen (2011, p.202), validity only exists if the participants can concur that the transcript of the interview is a true reflection of their social reality.

In the following section I explain the importance of the learner having the opportunity to validate their transcript/timeline as an accurate account.

## **h) Dependability and validity**

Transcriptions were made verbatim of the recorded interviews to feed back to the learners at a second interview for them to make revisions to the transcriptions and timelines. The focus of the second interview was to present significant events in their lives in a chronological order. In this way, I could test the dependability of my interviews. Cohen (2011, p.202) explains that dependability depends upon the researcher revisiting the interviewee in order to receive feedback on the authenticity, accuracy and honesty of the transcription. Dependability only exists if the participants can concur that the transcript of the interview is a true reflection of their social reality. I invited each of my interviewees to read or listen to a summary of the transcript/lifeline and recorded their reactions and made amendments as necessary. An audit trail was established (Appendix 9, Transcription and Validation Record). Validity is a measure of how trustworthy the researcher's accounts are of the social reality of the interviewees. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (cited in Cohen 2011, pp.182-183) explain that to ensure validity, the research design must follow a clear pattern. Validity was therefore built into every step of the design stage through the use of timescales, adequate resources, use of an appropriate methodology, appropriate instruments for data collection, appropriate sampling, an appropriate focus of the data collection, accurate data reporting and analysis, participant feedback on transcriptions and a clear audit trail.

Twelve learners attended for interview to validate their transcript and timeline. Three learners made slight amendments to their transcript but nothing significant to change the content. One learner at the validation interview had a preference for me to read out his transcript and timeline very slowly as he had difficulty with reading. All twelve learners validated their transcript and timeline as an accurate record. One learner, who was unable to attend for the validation interview, validated his transcript and timeline online via email as accurate. One learner who had poor mental health and had literacy difficulties did not attend the interview but requested that I read out his transcript/timeline over the telephone. Through discussion this learner validated his account as accurate.

The following section explains how I analysed the transcripts to create codes, categories and themes.

### **Data analysis strategy**

According to the founders of grounded theory methodology, “grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed” (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.273). Grounded theory is known as “bottom up” or “inductive reasoning” that enables us to generate ideas from the data, look for patterns and relationships across the data, and then progress from the data and observation to build theory and not test a hypothesis (Charmaz, 2006, p.103). Charmaz distinguishes herself from the early founders of grounded theory such as Glaser and Strauss, whose epistemological stance is “objectivist grounded theory” as they “reside in the positivist tradition and thus attend to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the processes of their production” (Charmaz, 2006, p.131). Instead, she advocates a “constructivist grounded theory” approach that is influenced by symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2006, pp.130-131).

Charmaz points out that constructivist grounded theory arises from an interaction between the researcher and participants and the researcher’s perspective being part of the process:

My approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretative portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it...Research participants’ implicit meanings, experiential views – and researchers’ finished grounded theories are constructions of reality (Charmaz, 2006, p.10).

The life history stories were transcribed into narratives and needed a rigorous approach for analysis. There is opposition in academic circles with regards to analysing narrative data through grounded theory and coding. According to Cohen (2011, p.553), coding of narratives risks “disembodying the text”. A narrative text

should not be fragmented but seen as a “whole rather than as discreet units” (p.533) to enable different interpretations of the text to be considered. It was advantageous to use grounded theory’s systematic approach as it not only enabled me to dissect the data but also bring it back together into themes to contribute to generating theory.

A grounded theory analysis fits into my overall methodology as it is data driven and does not test a hypothesis. It calls for symbolic interaction in constructing meaning through interaction between the researched and the researcher who interviews a purposive sample that will contribute to developing theory. Grounded theory is also an interpretative process for the researcher who interprets and conceptualises data of the phenomena studied. The strength of grounded theory is that it provides the researcher with a framework and systematic approach to data analysis.

### **The process of analysis - coding, categories and themes**

#### **a) The advantages and disadvantages of using Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) in the process of analysis.**

In planning data analysis, it is important for researchers to plan what tools they will use to manage and analyse their data (Macmillan cited in Garcia-Horta and Geurra Ramos, 2008, p.164). I attended NVivo software training to help me make an informed decision about coding, categorising and managing my data. NVivo software or any Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) does not code the data but stores, organises, re-configures and manages the data. It assists with the practicalities of sorting and classifying data that the researcher has entered for analysis. Coding is an intellectual exercise carried out by the researcher. According to Garcia-Horta and Geurra Ramos (2008, p.152) “qualitative software does not substitute the researcher’s analytical capacities to assign meaning, identify similarities and differences and establish relations in the data”. Although CAQDAS has many advantages over manual coding such as organising and re-organising documents and managing and retrieving data (Lewins and Silver, 2007, p.13), the researcher must be aware that by operating the software they are “facilitating the

management of data and not doing analysis” (Garcia-Horta and Guerra Ramos, 2008, pp.153-154). A further disadvantage of using CASDAQ is that it can reduce “meaning-making at the core of analytical analyses to a mechanistic process and therefore the researcher’s analytical abilities are important in preventing this from happening” (Richards and Richards 1994, p.452). A further disadvantage of CAQDAS is that it cannot identify categories or make coding decisions; interpreting the outcomes of the analysis and work at a conceptual level rests with the researcher and their analytical ability. As a new researcher, I found working concurrently on learning how to code and the study of qualitative data analysis, in addition to familiarising myself with the procedures and multiple functions of NVivo, distracted me from my data.

Basit (2003, p.143) points out that the researcher must take a critical stance and make an informed decision to use or not to use CAQDAS based on the following criteria “the size of a research project, the funds and time available and the inclination and expertise of the researcher”. I applied these criteria to my research project to make an informed decision about the coding my data electronically or manually. My project is on a small scale using fourteen transcripts that I had transcribed verbatim from semi-structured interviews that were conducted at 5 sites and were stored in Microsoft Word. As a new researcher, my decision was to code using the Microsoft Word new comment button, manage my data in Word and where appropriate manually use pencil and paper. According to Bazeley (2007, p.92) “it is better for first time or small scale studies, to code on hard copy print outs, first, not via CAQDAS”.

### **First cycle coding, categories and themes**

Codes in qualitative inquiry are most often a word or short phrase assigned to a portion of text. I began by reading and re-reading and reflecting on my transcripts line by line. I questioned the transcripts in the following way: ‘What do I see going on here?’; ‘What am I learning from this?’; ‘Is this what I expected or is something different or new happening here?’; and ‘Are there any similarities in the stories?’.

This enabled me to “remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.46).

My next step was to summarise each transcript by writing a precis. This was based on the following criteria: (1) the reason the interviewee was included in the study (did they fit sample criteria) (2) the key points made during each interview (3) anything new found in the data (4) anything found that supported what I have already learned (5) a summary description of the main content of data (6) any emerging themes (Rubin, 1995, p.206). I did a constant comparison between each precis: what had been the effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of individuals and had learners been able to be agentic in shaping a new identity? I looked for commonality and difference as I compared each precis. Once I had coded my transcripts, created categories, and developed themes emerging from each transcript I added these to each learner’s precis. This enabled me to do further analysis by producing a cross comparison between the employability skills programme and community adult education learners on the key themes of the effects of de-industrialisation and how effective community adult education and the employability skills programme had been in these de-industrialised communities to bring about exit, loyalty and voice. In addition, I had previously produced a timeline of chronological events of each participant’s life history.

This process had enabled me to become more familiar with the life history of each research participant but further examination of the data in more depth using First Cycle In Vivo and descriptive coding were important for the following reasons. First cycle In Vivo coding was related to my ontological interview questions. These are open questions to find out what are the lived experiences of the learners and attempt to capture the nature of participants’ social realities. According to Saldana (2009, p.48), In Vivo coding is a suitable way of ‘coding interview transcripts, as a method of attuning yourself to participant language, perspectives, and worldview’. First cycle descriptive coding was related to my epistemological questions that attempted to understand the phenomena being studied (Saldana, 2013, p.61). In Vivo coding



was used as it enables the researcher to use the verbatim words of the participants, “the terms used by participants themselves” (Strauss, cited in Saldana, 2009, p.74). This method of coding is the most appropriate for this study as it allows the voice of the marginalised to be heard (Saldana, 2009, p.134). In Vivo coding is also relevant as a sole coding method for a small-scale study (Saldana, 2009, p.136).

Although one coding method alone would suffice, I followed Saldana’s (2009, p.47) advice that “two or more codes are needed to capture the complex processes of phenomena in your data”. Descriptive coding summarises in a word or short phrase, mostly using a noun, the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data. According to Tesch (1990, p.119) “it is important that these codes are an identification of the topic not an abbreviation of the content...the content is the substance of the message”. Descriptive coding is appropriate for interview transcripts, field notes and documents and this form of coding helps to lead to categorisation of data contents (Saldana, 2009, p.70). It was important to look at frequency of codes in the data and group similar codes together, and question if there is an underlying meaning to any groups of codes. Coding is thus “a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or ‘families’ because they share some characteristics” (Saldana, 2009, p.8). Both In Vivo coding and descriptive coding are “essential for groundwork for second cycle coding” (Wolcott, cited in Saldana, 2009, p.73).

#### **Example of first cycle coding using In Vivo coding and descriptive coding on transcript of female community adult education learner:**

**Interviewer:** What effect has the closure of local industries had on you as an individual/on family life?

**Response:** I remember very much a community and we all looked after one another and knew each other and that was the sad thing to be quite honest when the mine went the community went ...**there was a sense of loss.**

**In Vivo Code:** ‘sense of loss’.

**Descriptive code: Community disintegration and loss**

**Response:** For the people and men that was left up here there was not a lot of work it was very much you know becoming dependent on benefit type culture rather than people working but **people wanted to work**

**In Vivo Code: 'people wanted to work'**

**Descriptive Code: The culture changed**

**Response:** It had a loss on family life...and the other thing was that **I was the breadwinner** and my **husband you know just picked up jobs when he could** and I was the main earner.

**In Vivo Code: 'I was the breadwinner'**

**Descriptive Code: Role Reversal**

**In Vivo Code: 'husband picked up jobs when he could'**

**Descriptive Code: Male Unemployment**

**Response:** It had an **effect on mental health** I think because of the loss of social structure of the community.

**In Vivo Code : 'effect on mental health'**

**Descriptive Coding : Anxiety**

**Interviewer:** What changes (or turning points) occurred in your life prior to you first engaging with learning?

**Response:** I had a personal crisis and **had a breakdown** then I came here (named community project)...it **helped me with my mental health and helped me get back into life** .

**In Vivo Code: 'had a breakdown'**

**Descriptive Code: Mental Health**

**In Vivo Code: 'helped me with my mental health and helped me get back into life'.**

### **Descriptive Code: Safe Place to Learn**

**Interviewer:** Has participation in community adult education helped you to take up paid employment (a) in the local community (b) external to community?

**Response:** When I came here (named ALW project) ... I then went into education and then I went back to college in my forties ...yes, **I am a tutor... and support worker...**I teach Counselling and Personal Development (at the same named community project).

**In Vivo Code: ‘I am a tutor...and support worker’**

### **Descriptive Code: Loyalty**

**Interviewer:** Has participation in community adult education. helped you to remain in your community and begin to make a valuable contribution to community life?

**Response:** **I do a lot of voluntary work...**I do the drop in service, one to one mentoring support and the listening service but it all enhanced my life.

**In Vivo Code: ‘I do a lot of voluntary’**

### **Descriptive Code: Loyalty**

I created code lists of each transcript and gave each code a definition. By organising codes in this way I was able to group similar coded data from across the transcripts into “families” because they shared the same characteristic (Saldana, 2009, p.9). I used constant comparison analysis that fits well with grounded theory (Thorne, 2000, p.69). In doing so I compared transcripts between different sites, for example the 3 sites of community adult education and the 2 sites delivering the employability skills programmes. I looked for what was similar or different to conceptualise relationships between the data, and then wrote the findings into memos. According to Thorne (2000, p.69) “this constant comparative process develops ways of understanding human phenomena within the context of which they have been experienced”.

## **Key findings from In Vivo and descriptive coding of interviews with community adult education research participants**

- Loss of traditional domestic role of women
- Destruction of community infrastructure and kinship/relationships/aid
- Social Fabric of Family Life Changed.
- Polarisation between men and women
- Role Reversal
- Patriarchal oppression
- Alcohol abuse
- Poor mental health
- Poor education that did not value the working class.
- A culture of no confidence and feelings of inferiority as a consequence of poor education
- Stigmatised and judged as having no value in economic terms
- Loss of respectability
- Difficulty in moving forward
- Need to find a safe place
- Austerity/ welfare reform /sanctioning/anxiety

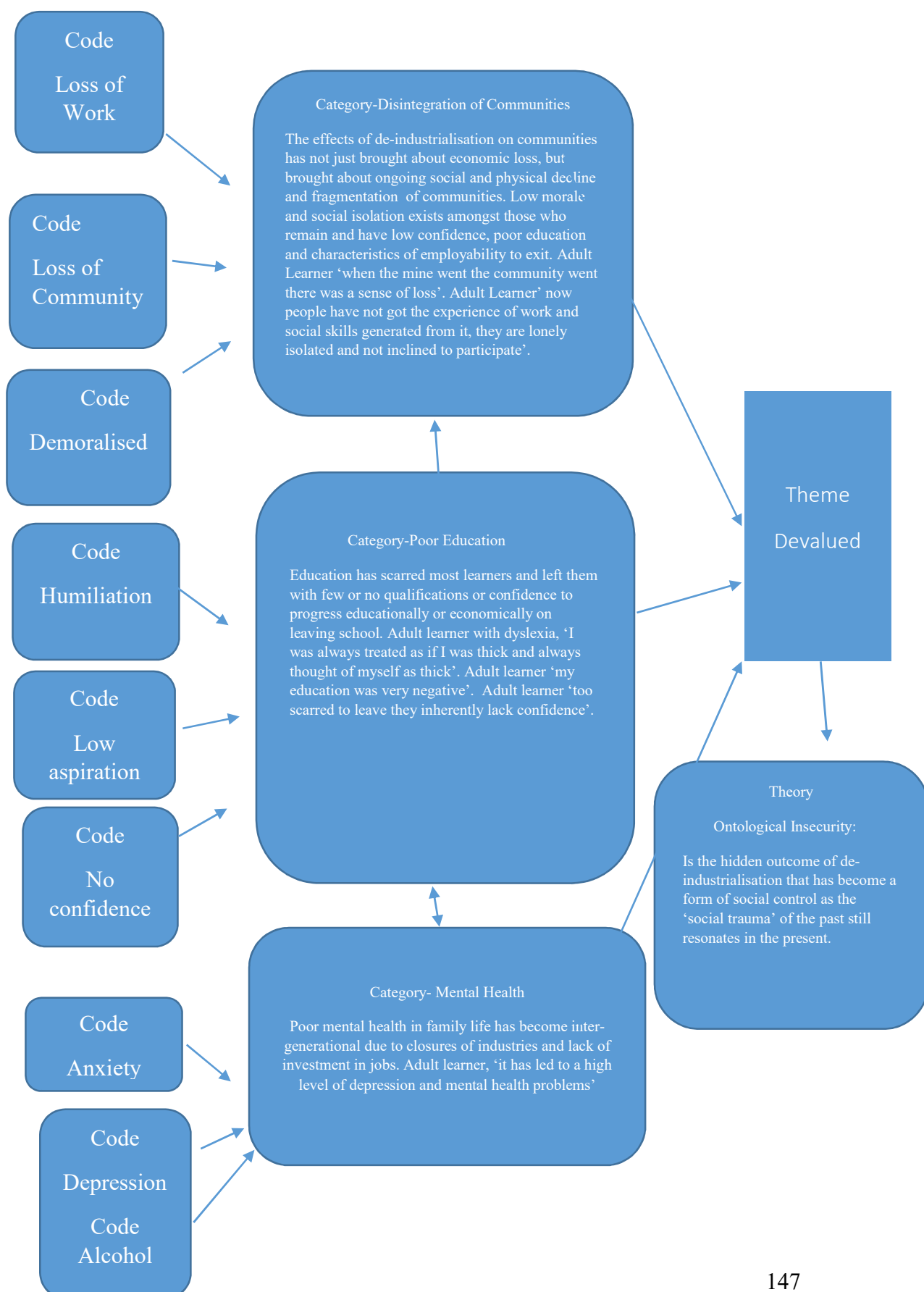
## **Second cycle coding**

Second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual or theoretical organisation from the first array of first cycle codes. First cycle codes are reorganised and reconfigured to develop a smaller and more select list of broader categories and themes. According to Charmaz (2006, p.186), categorising is an analytical step in grounded theory of selecting certain codes as having overall

significance or abstracting common themes and patterns in several codes into an analytical concept, “when the researcher categorizes they raise the conceptual level of the analysis from description to a more abstract, theoretical level”.

I used focused coding in this second cycle of coding as it is an adaptation of Axial coding. Axial coding explains how categories relate to each other and brings the data back into a coherent whole after the researcher has fractured it through line-by-line-coding (Charmaz, 2006, p.186). Focused coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for studies using grounded theory as its methodology (Saldana, 2009, pp.155-157). Focused coding helps to identify the “most frequent or significant of codes and looks for code relationships in order to build categories around them” (Saldan, 2013, p.264). In clustering “families” of significant codes together they became categories and patterns began to emerge (Saldana, 2009, p.9). Each category was given a propositional statement for its inclusion and supported with samples of data and its allocated codes (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.251). In creating categories, I moved from the descriptive level to begin to conceptualise the findings. I proceeded to compare categories with each other to establish relationships in order to create a theme(s) based on their combination. The following diagram explains the pattern of moving from focused codes to categories to the theme of devalued.

**Diagram 1 Example of focused codes to inform major categories to inform theme of ‘devalued’ and inform theory of ontological insecurity**



## Analytical Memos

Analytical memos allow the researcher to “stop and analyze their ideas about their codes and emerging categories in whatever way it occurs to them...it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages” (Glaser, 1978, p.83 cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.188). They are especially helpful to the analyst who may not have a clear concept in mind but is struggling to clarify one. They are particularly helpful in weaving codes together through key words from the coding into the analytical memo narrative (Saldana, 2009, p.36). They are also helpful in reflecting on how categories are interrelated to each.

My analytical memo in bringing together the three categories into the theme of ‘devalued’ is outlined below:

**Date: 8.10.16.**

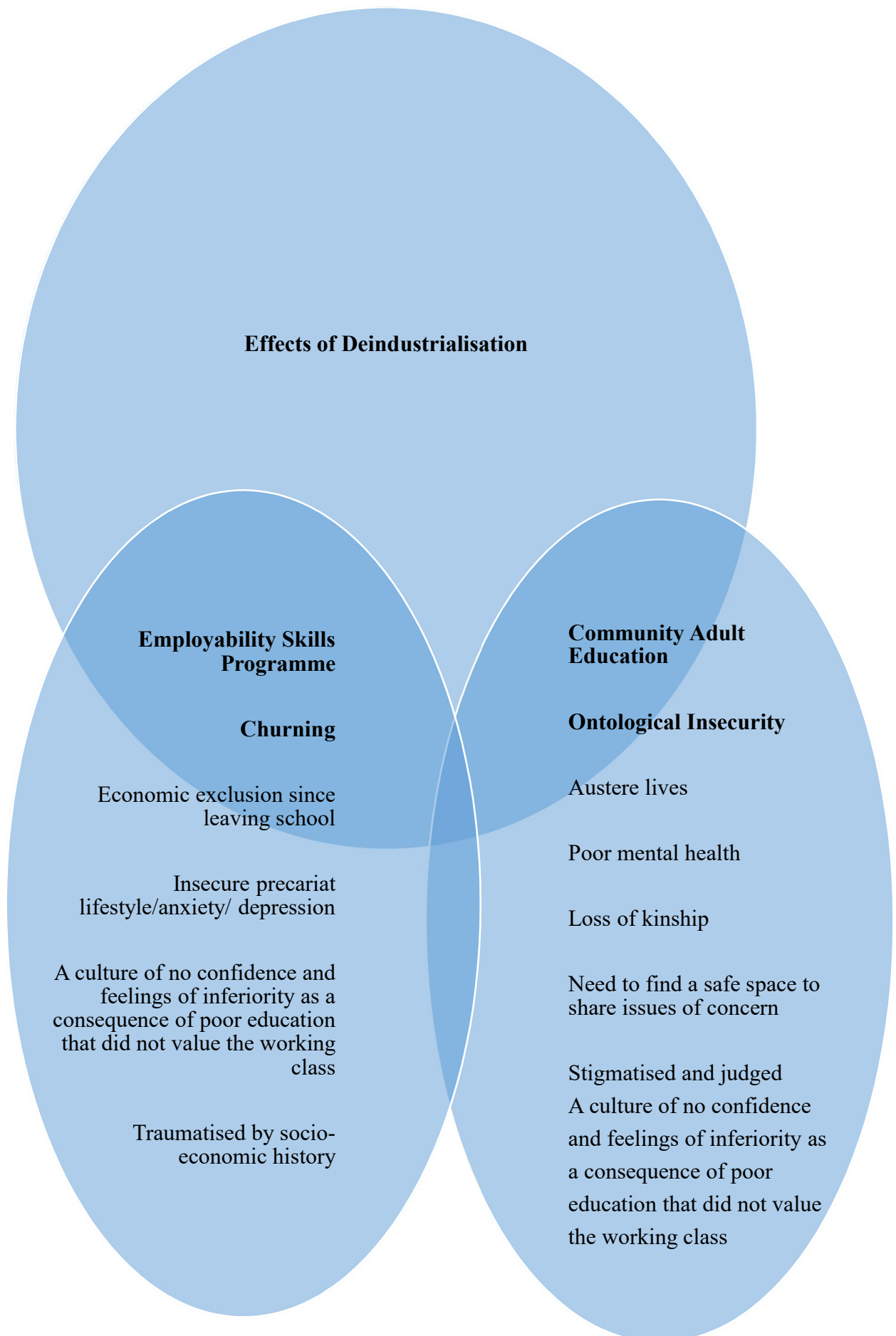
De-industrialisation has ‘demoralised’ people through the ‘loss of work’ and by casting them out of the workplace to become long term unemployed welfare claimants. Unemployment is now intergenerational within families in these communities. The vulnerability of being forced off welfare benefits to take up short term low paid work increases ‘anxiety’ as it is no way out of poverty or into permanent work. The effect of this on family life has brought about ‘alcohol’ problems in families with some women experiencing ‘anxiety’ and ‘depression’. The poor education experienced in these working class communities has not enabled learners to achieve the qualifications and skills that would enable them to leave the area to find and take up employment. Not only this but for many it has been an education that has ‘scarred’ them and left them feeling ‘humiliated’ and with ‘no confidence’. Their lives have been diminished. **Next action** – go back to research statistics on alcoholism, mental health and levels of educational qualifications in County Durham to support the data (Appendices 1,2,3).

I wrote memos throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle coding processes. Once coding began I wrote analytical memos about why I had created the code and what the code reveals, and to track commonality between codes and in identifying families of codes that could become conceptualised into a category, and then made connections between categories to conceptualise a theme (Glaser, 1978, p.82).

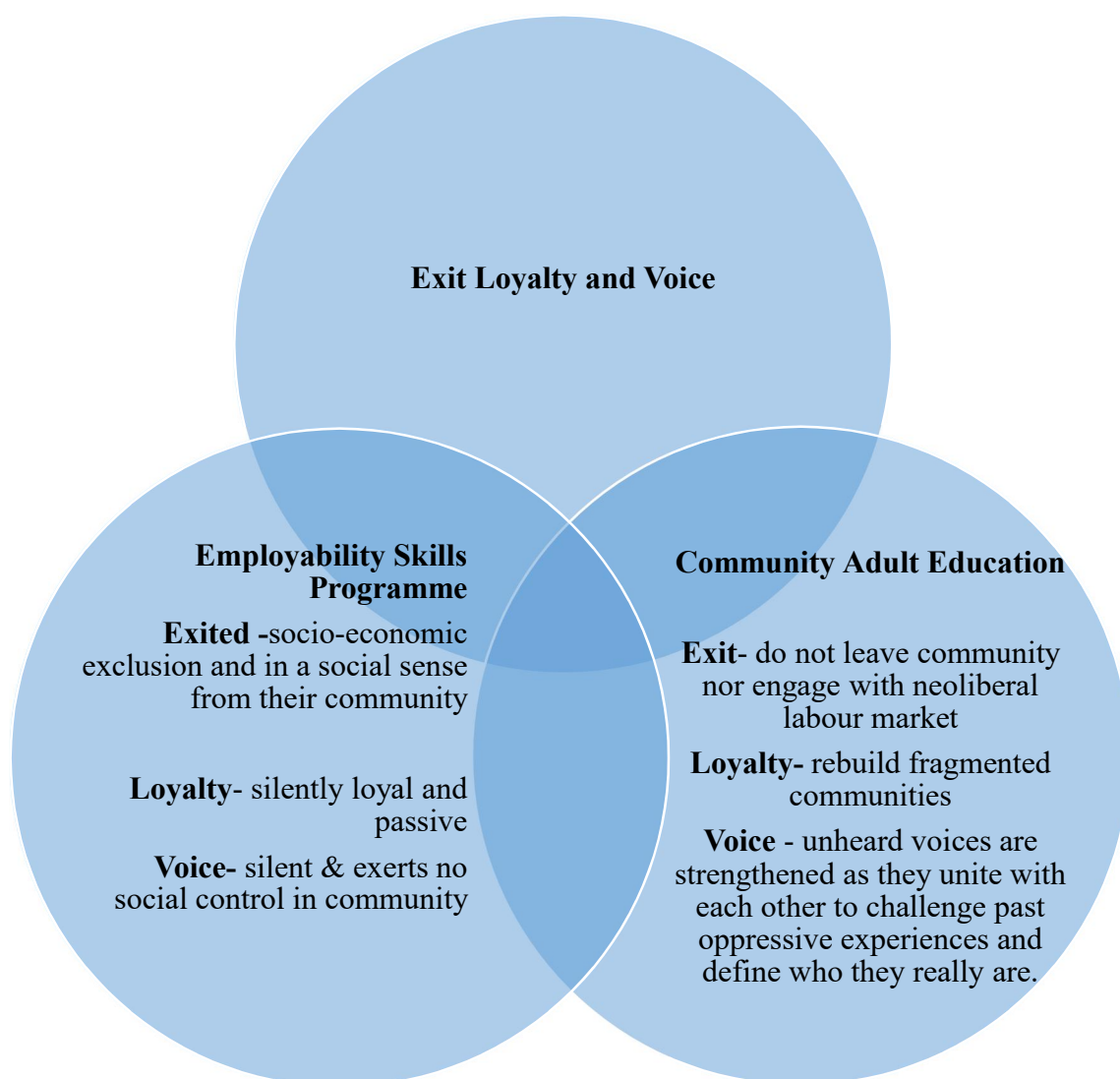
According to Van Manen (cited in Saldana, 2009, p.140) a theme is “the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand”. The criterion I used to develop themes from the major categories, thus moving them from reality to the abstract, was the “touch test” which are “those things that cannot literally be touched are conceptual, phenomenological and represent forms of abstraction” (Saldana, 2009, p.187). The question I asked myself on writing a theme was ‘could I touch what it represented?’ and if not then the major categories could be moved to a theme.

**Diagram 2: Provides an example of comparative analysis between Employment Skills Programme and Community Adult Education learners on the effects of de- industrialisation on their lives.**





**Diagram 3: Comparison of how Employment Skills Programme learners and Community Adult Education learners react to an economic crisis in their communities through the framework of Exit, Loyalty and Voice.**



### **Evaluation of grounded theory research study**

I questioned if there was a strong connection between my raw data and the categories. Were the claims of ontological insecurity and churning that a grounded theory methodology had produced a conceptual explanation for my study? Did the theory of ontological insecurity and churning provide a relevant explanation of the actual problems and experiences of the research participants? Had the theory emerged through phases within first cycle coding (initial, In Vivo and descriptive) and then second cycle focus coding? Had I found a central phenomenon within the study? I answered yes to all of these questions.

In the next section I outline the Ethical Approach for this study and the importance of protecting the research participant throughout the research process.

### **Ethical Approach**

According to Darlington and Scott (2002, p.23) it is the duty of the researcher to ensure the proposed research will not cause harm to research participants and adequate safeguards need to be put in place to protect participants. Informed consent, minimal intrusiveness, confidentiality and anonymity all require implementation if the participant is to be protected. It is for this reason I used Cohen's (2011, pp.75-104) code of ethical practice of a model of informed consent that ensures dignity and respect in working with marginalised groups.

Research participants in this study belonged to marginalised groups who had experienced unemployment, had poor health and suffered from anxiety and mild depression, and had moderate literacy difficulties including computer illiteracy. However, they did not suffer from severe mental health difficulties or learning

difficulties or exceedingly low levels of literacy or English language skills. Such groups are referred to specialist provision outside of mainstream providers and were not intended to be part of this study. Therefore, research participants in this study had the cognitive capacity to agree to the informed consent statement of their own volition and did not require the ‘proxy consent’ procedures to be put in place that is relevant for vulnerable groups.

Cohen’s (2011, pp.75-104) model of informed consent enabled me as a researcher to take the following action for this project. I clarified what the roles and responsibilities of the providers, their staff, the participants, and the researcher were to play within the research process. Staff would assist in engaging participants by communicating the purpose of the research through the circulation of a participant information sheet (Appendix 6) with key points about the research project, what it would mean to be involved in the project and what would happen with the information. Reassurance regarding welfare benefits not being affected by taking part in the research process was given. There was no financial reward for participants and so they needed to participate voluntarily. As a researcher, I discussed fully with participants through initial individual or group meetings the purpose of the research, their role in the research process and how their voice (which would not otherwise be heard) can make a significant contribution in providing new knowledge. Dialogue took place on the importance of the researcher and participants having a responsibility to each other if true collaboration in the research process is to be achieved. Transparency is key to collaboration between both parties who must have “no deliberate intention to lie or deceive” (Sikes cited in Goodson 2010, p.102).

I informed the participants how the data would be collected and gained their permission to use an audiotape to collect their stories. There was no hesitation or opposition from any of them on the use of this device to collect data. I informed them that transcripts of the audiotapes would be made and that there would be a follow up meeting with them to issue a copy of their transcript and a timeline of their life history for them to validate. Written permission to proceed with the research

interview was provided by each participant through completion of an informed consent form issued at their initial meeting with me (Appendix 7) As indicated by the Economic and Social Research Council in their report *Informed Consent in Social Research* (p.16):

Giving people adequate time to consider their involvement in participating is important as is the signing of the consent form as this increases the understanding of the participant's involvement and what their rights are in relation to participation, confidentiality and anonymity.

Participants were "informed of the right to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so" (BERA, 2011, p.6). This, I explained, could be before, during or after the interview had taken place. No participant to date has withdrawn at any stage of the research process.

I had given consideration to the possibility that participants with moderate literacy difficulties might need to be provided with alternative strategies for informed consent and validation of transcriptions and timelines. The report *Informed Consent in Social Research* (p.17) proposed the use of "tape recorded consent, providing marks on a consent form or holding up red or green cards to indicate yes or no" if literacy was an issue in gaining consent and validation of transcripts. There was no necessity to apply these strategies at the informed consent stage; however, two male learners from the government programme had a preference for me to read their transcripts and timelines slowly, which they then validated. Where participants had mild depression or anxiety and found the interview process more stressful than others, I was prepared to be vigilant in watching for these signs. According to Wiles (cited in ESRC Report, p.19) "some researchers' issue 'stop cards' in case participants experience stress during the interview process. If such an approach does not reduce their stress then a 'model of continual consent' or a change of approach may need to be implemented if they are to remain engaged in the research process" (Allcock et al., 2009, p.49). Although some research participants confided in me regarding their poor state of mental health which they referred to as 'depression' and their anxiety over the welfare state's sanctioning procedures that may cause them a loss of welfare benefits,

there were no indications of a high level of stress or anxiety at interview that required me to put the 'stop cards' in place.

In disseminating the voices of research participants, I had a duty to ensure privacy would be protected and the anonymity of respondents guaranteed. This has been achieved through grounded theory methods and thematic data analysis where all data collected from participants is collated into codes, categories and themes. This approach has prevented participants being identified and ensures present and future confidentiality and anonymity. Each life story was anonymised.

Although an equal role of the participants and researcher in the research process is important (Cohen, 2011, pp.85-87), it is doubtful that a totally non-hierarchical approach is possible as there will always be a certain "inherent status differential" (Goodson, 2010, p.102). According to Phoenix (cited in Goodson, 2010, p.94), however, the research interview is partly dependent on the shared social class relationship of the researcher and the researched. My working class heritage of being born into this once industrial county and my experience of once living and working in a de-industrialised community gives this research project the potential to be partially non-hierarchical.

This was non-therapeutic research, as it was not intended to benefit the research participant directly. The research participant was not being interviewed regarding traumatic experiences, however, as a researcher I was unable to eliminate all risk of intrusiveness as much depends on participants' characteristics. According to Cohen (2011, p.87) negative emotions are often experienced as participants relive their experiences through the interview process. I considered this to be minimal risk research which means "risk of harm anticipated in the proposed research is not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those encountered in daily life" (Koocher, cited in Darlington, 2002, p.27). Research participants did disclose their mental health issues and health problems; issues about drugs in their community;

patriarchal oppression and alcoholism they had experienced; and information about their special needs children. Where such confidences were divulged I had planned to arrange a debriefing session after an interview with an appropriate agency for a participant, had this been necessary. This did not arise, however, as those who were experiencing these difficulties were already connected to a wide range of support agencies through their providers. The opportunity to be provided with a debriefing session was included in the participant information sheet (Appendix 6)

Using the explained model of informed consent, minimal intrusiveness, confidentiality arrangements and anonymity enabled me to build trust prior to entering into the interviews and throughout the research process to prevent possible ethical issues arising. The research was in accordance with University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education Ethical Guidelines (August 2005) and the British Educational Research Association Guidelines (2011).

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the constructionist approach that directed my study enabled new knowledge to be made through the prism of individual experience whilst taking account of enduring inequalities which shape meaning. Symbolic interactionism allowed for the mutual construction of knowledge informed by the experiences, meanings and interpretations of learners. A qualitative, interpretivist approach attempted to make sense of phenomena such as de-industrialisation in terms of the meanings people bring from their everyday lives and surroundings. Taking a life history approach to data collection was compatible with my qualitative research strategy that was interpretative and used symbolic interactionism in the construction of meaning during data collection.

In attempting to engage a purposive sample, which could provide meaningful data to inform the research questions, my study took a different direction and became a comparative study of community adult education and the Employability Skills Programme. A grounded theory analysis fitted well into my overall methodology as it is data driven and does not test a hypothesis. It calls for symbolic interaction in constructing meaning through interaction between the researched and the researcher who interviews a purposive sample that will contribute to developing theory. The strength of grounded theory is that it provides the researcher with a framework and systematic approach to data analysis through coding, categorising and themes to inform theory. The process of grounded theory took me from raw data to the theories of ontological insecurity and churning that give insight into the actual problems and experiences of the research participants.

In the next chapter, the themes of ontological insecurity and churning are evidenced by 14 life history stories that are analysed and supported by a review of literature on these topics.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Analysis -The experience of employability schemes: ‘outsiders on the inside’**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the study examines the experiences of six men who attended a number of government programmes that are focused on employability skills training. These six individual life stories demonstrate that despite participation in a number of these government programmes they have continued to experience unemployment. These programmes are premised on the notion that unemployed individuals have skill deficiencies and that they must constantly be participating in repetitive skills training that will provide them with the characteristics to be ready to exit unemployment to supply a precarious labour market (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005, pp.177-219) (Friedli and Stern, 2015, pp.40-47).

Skill deficits are the problem that individuals need to rectify if they are going to exit unemployment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess and the way in which they use those assets and present them to employers. The broader context in which these skills are supposed to be of value is ignored and downplayed, as the individual is held accountable rather than labour market conditions and wider social, economic and institutional factors that influence a person's ability to find work. Increasingly, the use of welfare and benefit sanctions in government policy is being deployed, as we shall see, to discipline unemployed people into repetitive and fruitless searches for work. The process of deindustrialisation has not only scarred the community, which has been blighted by structural inequalities, but also the identities of people who are experiencing a very different sense of exit: that is, exit from the social life of the community.

## **The Government's Employability Skills Programme**

The Government's Employability Skills Programme has been a central component within all Welfare Reform Bills passed between 2009 and 2012, intended to bring about a reduction in the welfare bill by moving claimants off welfare into low paid work to meet the demands of a precarious British economy. It is a means of assuring the taxpayer that welfare claimants are doing something in return for their welfare payment.

As part of the Welfare Reform Act (2009), the coalition government, in 2011, introduced Workfare. Workfare requires the welfare claimant to comply with the strict and conditional requirements of the welfare system and attend mandatory training to prove they are working for their welfare benefits. Despite labour market discrepancies in regions and localities, a Mandatory Work Activity Scheme was implemented with the purpose of targeting welfare claimants 'who had failed to demonstrate that they had the drive and discipline to secure employment in the previous nine to 12 months'. Job Centre Plus advisers were to refer these claimants to a mandatory Employability Skills Programme that would provide employability skills training and a 'work related activity' that was expected to enable them to exit unemployment and return to the labour market. The Employability Skills Programme was yet another back-to-work employment programme for welfare claimants. Although 'work-related activity' was a key component of this programme, this was not clearly defined as it was up to each training provider to decide on each welfare claimant's case with regards to such an activity. Failure by the claimant to take up an offer of a 'work-related activity' would incur sanctioning, resulting in loss of benefit (Child Poverty Action Group, 2011). The sanctions were four weeks for a first failure, and 13 weeks for a second failure within 52 weeks of a previous failure. Sanctions sent a strong message to Employability Skills Programme learners to ensure that they were motivated to fulfil the requirements of their claimant commitment with Job Centre Plus (Williams, 2012, pp.1-4).

The claimant commitment, as a condition of entitlement to welfare benefit, involved details of their availability for work and work-seeking activity to ensure that they fully participated in: (1) ‘work focused interviews’ to assess work prospects, and identify activities, training and work opportunities to enhance the claimant’s job prospects; (2) ‘work preparation’ to improve their personal presentation at interviews in order to increase chances of paid work, skills assessments, training and work experience through placements; (3) ‘work placements’, which included mandatory work activity for Employability Skills Programme learners of four weeks unpaid work and in addition, those learners who had been on the programme for two or more years might be required to attend a mandatory community work placement for a minimum of 26 weeks; (4) ‘work search’, which was looking for and applying for jobs, producing a CV, and registering with an employment agency. Learners had to regard looking for work as their full-time job, and in doing so work for their benefits. They were required to look for any full-time work paying at least the minimum wage within 90 minutes of their home (Simmons, 2011, pp.1-4). Within this strict, mandatory government programme, welfare claimants were also expected to learn. They were to participate in employability skills training relevant to local labour market requirements, as well as having a focus on their maths and English. NVQ level 2 qualifications were on offer as were qualifications in Health and Safety at Work, First Aid at Work, Food Hygiene, and Fork Lift Truck Driving. This skills training was meant to be tailored to the specific needs of local employers and to help the unemployed compete for jobs in different sectors (Skills Funding Statement 2012-2015, pp.10-11). The strict conditionality and punitive measures applied to the unemployed, who were coerced through “psychological interventions” into modifying their attitude towards taking up insecure work, and punishment through sanctioning when not complying has, according to Friedli (2015, p.40), become an “ethical issue”.

The government’s programme has not been the success that the coalition government hoped it would be. Nationally, the success rate for finding work through the

programme from June 2011 to 2013 only increased from 3.5% to 13.4%. The Labour Party claimed it was 'worse than doing nothing' (BBC News, 27.6.2013).

## **Organisation of chapter**

This chapter is organised according to the four key themes emerging from the analysis of the life stories. These themes are community, churning, surveillance and identity. The following six life history stories are drawn from learners attending government programmes delivered at a community base either in a former East Durham mining area or in a North West Durham former steel town.

## **Life history stories**

### **Brian**

Brian recalls a sense of relief on leaving school in this former mining community: 'The day I left school it was good it was positive'. He left with no qualifications and a negative experience of formal education. Brian's life has lacked the economic security enjoyed by his father and grandfather. He recalls how difficult it was to find work after leaving school. 'After a length of time I am starting to struggle to find work'. Rather than become unemployed he enrolled as a full time student at a further education college for two years.

On leaving college at eighteen his search for work proved fruitless. Brian's only option was to move on to welfare benefits, which lasted for four years. Throughout this time Brian recalls that he attended evening classes for computing to keep himself going; however, he states 'I am starting to struggle...to keep myself motivated, I did lots of temporary courses on computers at the college at evening classes'. Brian attended in the evening so it would not affect his welfare benefits, as he was required to be available for work during the day.

At the age of 22 years he hoped for a better future as he entered the labour market for the first time 'through an agency on a temporary basis'. Since then he has been intermittently employed on short-term agency contracts. This precarious work lasted until 2005 when, for the first time, he finally secured 'permanent' work. However, in the 2008 economic crisis his job was affected and eventually disappeared in 2010.

Brian explains his precarious circumstances and his unsuccessful efforts to secure work:

I am...going round in circles getting nowhere...the Job Centre put me on a 13 week course ...the minimum number of job applications was 5 applications a day...the Yellow Pages you go through and apply, apply, apply its hard work.

Since 2010 he has had no choice but to claim welfare benefits. Brian explains how he is treated through the welfare system:

The Job Centre put me through the training provider called Partnership Trust for 2 years to do the basics on how to look for jobs, how to do CVs, how to act at work, how to treat people at work, how to respect other people. I attended 3 times a week and then the Partnership Trust sent me to this government programme. I was supposed to go on a customer based training course. The next thing I am in a warehouse, there are no customers in a warehouse. It is not just me who is having these issues there are other people as well. The training provider is getting rid of people and putting them where they want them and they don't care what the learners think.

Despite this negative experience of the process, he acknowledges that the tutors he has met are supportive in increasing confidence and self-esteem, 'the tutors back you up and they put you on the right path with confidence'.

Brian has achieved some low level qualifications but it has not helped him cope with anxiety and loss of control over his life. His life has been a constant struggle; the 'exit' he has experienced is a revolving door of short-term, insecure work and meaningless schemes whose only redeeming feature is the positive role played by

adult education tutors. In his present precarious existence, he cycles around his local area in search of work, but with no success.

### **Kevin**

Kevin had a negative experience of education and left school at 16 with no qualifications. He did not continue his education by participating in education and training through a local college but began his working life in a bar as a glass collector. Since then he has been employed in numerous, short-term, low paid, unskilled factory jobs through agencies. Kevin explains, 'it's all agency work and so there is no steady full time job'. His last job was in 2011 and with no further opportunity of work on offer he has been treated for depression.

For the last four years Kevin has had to adhere to the strict conditional requirements of welfare to work schemes that have required mandatory attendance on government training initiatives, otherwise his welfare benefits are sanctioned. He finds that referral systems between providers are poorly communicated to welfare claimants. Kevin explains, 'they are not well explained and not easy to navigate to me...and you are passed from pillar to post'. On re-engaging with learning he was nervous and not confident due to his poor experience of formal education and lack of qualifications. His confidence was restored through the support of a tutor, who, Kevin explains, 'really brought me out of my shell and I have been great since then'.

Continual participation in government initiatives has not provided Kevin with sustainable work. It has, however, provided him with a lifeline of having somewhere to go locally to focus on work related learning and become less socially isolated. Participation in learning has helped him cope better with a stressful family life. Kevin explains:

Before I came on this course I was beginning to get agoraphobic... I was just stuck in the house 24/7...no offence to me family or anything like that locked

in a room with the same people...tensions get high. I am...calmer at home...it has made a large difference.

The former mining village that Kevin was born into just before the Miners' Strike (1985) has, in recent years, suffered social and physical decay. The re-location of impoverished families into the village has created a drink and drugs culture that is destroying the social fabric of village life. Kevin explains, 'it is like they are forcing all of the worst people down into the village...it like a hole. It is just festering from the inside out, drugs, drinking all that kind of thing'.

Kevin understands how this deterioration within the social fabric of the village has occurred and so he has moved his family to another location. Kevin explains:

They have no money to make themselves proud of their house, no money to get a car. They have this measly amount of money and they get a couple of bottles of cider. You are talking about...alcoholics as young as 22 they are drinking from the age of 10 younger sometimes its lifestyle down and that is why I wanted my kids out of it.

Kevin joined a racist protest that was organised by local people. He explains, 'I protested against the building of a mosque at the village the reason being that I am concerned about the negative influence of the Islamic religion on my children'.

Through mandatory workfare arrangements he has complied with taking a short-term, seven-week contract, otherwise he will be sanctioned. This is not a solution to his problems as he will eventually be recycled back onto welfare benefits. Kevin has not constructed a meaningful identity through attending a government programme.

## **Ben**

Ben frequently truanted from school. His attitude towards education was influenced by a father who did not see the need for, or the importance of, education. Ben explains, 'I learnt more outside of school as I learnt everything off me dad it was not

benefitting us. I just did not want to go to school I hated it'. Ben's racist views were also learnt as a young child from his father. Ben explains:

I learnt everything off me dad...me dad said...if you let one into the country they all will want to be in and they are all in and that's where our jobs have gan [gone] as they are willing to work for little money.

Ben left school at 16 with no qualifications and progressed to a college of further education till 18 years of age. Since leaving college in 1992, with no qualifications, Ben explains that his time has been spent, 'on the dole' as a long-term unemployed welfare claimant, with the exception of three, low-waged, short-term contracts in factories. He last worked eight years ago and such a long period of social exclusion from the workplace has contributed to a loss of confidence and poor physical and mental health. Ben explains:

It's affected me health and since I've been out of work I've lost me self-confidence ... on anti-depressants for years and two year ago heart attacks through stress... confidence was that low a few year ago I took an overdose.

Ben recognises that changes to welfare policies that previously entitled him to welfare benefits without conditions attached have been removed. Ben explains, 'at the Job Centre I was on Employment Support Allowance and I failed the medical and so they put me on Job Seekers' Allowance'. Consequently, he has been mandated to attend welfare to work schemes where he must work for his welfare benefits. Ben sees changes to welfare as having disrupted his life, but despite its strict conditionality he complies with its requirements.

As a previous school-refuser, who was 'anxious' about re-engaging with learning for the mandatory requirements of the Employability Skills Programme, he has come to recognise its value. He now recognises how unemployment and no participation in learning has caused him to lose his confidence and become socially isolated. Ben explains:



Little bit anxious cause everything I did not get taught at school for not going I have learnt down here...didn't really know much until I come down here it has been that many years...it's put me confidence straight through the roof.

He sees the benefits of the programme as not just obtaining work related skills and low level qualifications but helping him to get back into a routine and to socialise with people. Ben explains 'it just being with people or just getting up and out of the house'.

Through mandatory workfare arrangements Ben will take up a short-term, seven-week contract otherwise he will be sanctioned. He is happy to comply with this arrangement but it is not a solution to his complex needs, as it will probably lead to further welfare recycling. For Ben, attendance on the Employability Skills Programme seems to have created a comfortable illusion. He views it as 'getting you used to be back employed again so when we leave we are more employable we have more qualifications now that is going to be better for us'. However, the experience of others on these programmes does not sustain this optimism.

## **Henry**

Henry's experience of school in the steel town was negative. In his words 'teachers did not want to be there anymore than the students'. He left with no qualifications and a poor education that left him with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Henry has lacked economic security and direction in his life. Unlike his father, who held permanent manual work in the steel industry, Henry has experienced long periods of unemployment mixed with short-term government programmes. Henry describes his employment history as 'patchy...it has been a lot like that yeah in and out of factory work and everything'.

He recalls the number of government initiatives he has attended while unemployed: 'over the years I have been all over the town in various places with different training providers. I have dipped in and out of different courses at different times'.

Henry found the benefits of engaging in learning were better than being isolated at home and with the help of supportive tutors he recently achieved a NVQ Level 2 in numeracy skills. He explains:

It made me feel I was wasting all me time when unemployed, you know, it was nice to be doing something. I have got me level 2 numeracy but I've got me level 2 literacy skills to take in a couple of weeks.

In the above terms, Henry values his participation on the government's programme as he works towards achieving his literacy qualification. However, he is anxious and feels insecure as he expresses concern regarding the Job Centre Plus universal job match system that monitors the number of job applications he makes. He vividly describes the effects of the welfare reform system on himself and other claimants:

It's now more stricter on the dole now and I have to go on this job thing every day. I have to go on the job's match...before it wasn't as difficult...it has made me feel more pressurised and every time you sign on you are always worried that you haven't done everything just right because they will stop your money you know...yeah... definitely a bad thing like. I know a lot of people say it's like, light a fire under us, as we have to please them rather than focus on your job search.

Participation in government initiatives has provided Henry with a lifeline of a local support service that has at least prevented him from becoming socially isolated and enabled him to overcome his literacy and numeracy difficulties. It has not, however, provided him with secure employment, and exit with a purpose eludes him as he continues to live a precarious existence.

## **Mike**

Mike's story is different from that of the other learners. He received a good education and was educated to 'A' level. He progressed to a local university where he achieved a Degree in Cultural Communication and Media Studies and a Master's Degree in Computer Game Studies. On leaving university he returned to live in the family home in a de-industrialised steel town.

Since leaving university he has worked for two organisations that help people set up their own businesses. Mike explains that when the European Regional Development Fund for North East Digital Entrepreneurs became available through the Labour Government he resigned from his job to set up his own digital business. In 2010, his digital business was closed down when there was a change in government. Mike explains 'Conservatives took over and closed down the Regional Development Agency [and so] there has been a decline in digital development and loss of funding [for North East businesses] a great opportunity has been taken away'. Mike has become disconnected from a network of digital entrepreneurs since the state's withdrawal of funding for the digital economy. Mike explains how these changes have personally affected him:

I think it affects my confidence in a few ways...before when I was trying to set up the business I was raring to go. I don't feel quite the same anymore because the opportunities are not there and there is no incentive.

Mike's pursuit of economic success has made his position in life more insecure and his disposition less positive.

Mike has now been a welfare claimant for four years. He must comply with the conditional requirements of welfare to work, which is to work for his benefits. He has been mandated to attend the Employability Skills Programme otherwise his welfare benefits may be sanctioned. He is accepting of the situation, 'I found it all right...it is not up to standards of a university'. He gives recognition to the support

provided by tutors but sees nothing new in the content of the programme. He explains, 'I am not 100% sure of what the point of it is other than that it is to encourage us to do something instead of just claiming benefits and not doing anything in return'. His time is controlled and he is surveilled in this learning environment that offers poor quality jobs and low-level vocational qualifications that are well below the academic qualifications that he has already successfully achieved.

Mike's education and participation in the Employability Skills Programme have not encouraged him to contribute to community life but to pursue economic success. His Master's Degree enabled him to study comparisons between 'real world communities in comparison with online world virtual communities'. Due to his education, he has come to view communities differently. He thinks people have a different attitude towards meeting collectively in social places, which he refers to as the 'village green', to discuss issues. Mike explains, 'people nowadays are not connected to that type of thing...the sense that you have to do something for the community is non-existent. I think we have just moved on'. Mike's education has moved him in a different direction. If he was to speak on public issues he claims that he would take action through social media where one can 'be in contact with each other 100% of the time 24/7', and it provides anonymity 'you can hide your IP address'. Mike's attitude to community further contributes to his social isolation.

## **Sean**

Sean explains his sudden and dramatic lifestyle change to live in a de-industrialised steel town is due to personal circumstances, 'I found myself in a position after divorce I needed to get away...I didn't have much going for me so I upped and relocated'.

Sean was educated in London and his experience of school was not a happy one. He explains that he 'hated being at school' because he was bullied by his peers, and he thinks that this was due to him being 'fat and socially inept'. He found the teaching

style of his teachers, methods and pace of learning difficult for him to adjust to as he was an average student who felt he was not having his learning needs met. His teachers would say ‘you aren’t trying are you?’ He left school at 16 years with a few ‘O’ levels and with an apprenticeship which did not provide a job for life.

Sean did not complete his apprenticeship as he found difficulty in completing tasks on time. He has spent his working life employed in a plethora of low skilled roles in London, an area of high economic opportunities. Since arriving four years ago into this former steel town that has high levels of unemployment, he has become long-term unemployed.

On registering as a welfare claimant with Job Centre Plus, he has spent the last four years moving between numerous welfare to work initiatives with no offer of employment. He returned to learning through mandatory welfare to work programmes at the age of 58. As an older learner he has found it stressful being in a classroom to achieve low-level qualifications. Often he felt out of place as the oldest person in the class, where he was surrounded by young people. This affected his confidence, until he saw that his tutors demonstrated fairness and provided a conducive learning environment that gave him the confidence to speak out. Sean explains, ‘they were all positive they treat everybody the same no matter what size, shape, age, or colour you were’. This experience was very different to his school days. Sean’s past education experiences still cause him feelings of anxiety in classroom settings. He has achieved lateral progression in a number of low-level vocational qualifications through government initiatives, but he is unable to progress to a NVQ Level 3 qualification unless he is employed.

He finds nothing new in the current government programme he attends except that he has to comply with the conditional requirements to prove he is doing something for his welfare payment. He is unhappy that he has to undertake an intensive job search within thirty miles of his home by making eight job applications daily. As very few

jobs exist, he applies to employers through the Yellow Pages booklet, where no actual vacancies exist, but he must show willingness to search for work. He must log on to the job seekers' website each day to register the applications he has made. This information is electronically surveilled and is analysed in time for his next interview with Job Centre Plus. This causes him anxiety as he may be sanctioned and lose benefits if he does not satisfy their criteria. He finds the learning environment established through this government programme stressful, and he explains, 'I come here and I find it difficult to concentrate'.

Sean attends interviews for part-time work, but finds that he faces a high level of competition. In addition, the presence of foreign workers has influenced the jobs market, which he sees as making it more difficult for him to find work. He explains:

I attended an interview for a cleaning opportunity for 6 hours a week and there are 90 of us there...the manager called out 'anybody speak Polish. My foreman's Polish so if you can speak Polish the job's yours'.

Sean describes those unemployed in this deprived area as being on the 'underside' as he now associates on a daily basis with welfare benefit claimants, many of whom have been dependent on welfare for at least two generations. There is a culture of poverty in this de-industrialised area that he has not seen in South East England. Sean's identity had been previously tied into his occupation in London but despite attending the Employability Skills Programme for four years in this de-industrialised area it has been unable to help Sean secure a new occupational identity. Since moving to this area he is becoming more socially excluded from the jobs market, and consequently may join what he describes as the 'underside'.

## **Analysis**

### **Introduction**

The following section introduces the reader to the themes of community, churning, surveillance and identity evident in the testimonies of these men.

### **Themes**

#### **Introduction**

Within each theme where verbatim text is taken from a life story this it to provide examples of how learners living in deprived communities have experienced churning through employability programmes and how surveillance and sanctioning increases anxiety.

#### **Community**

Community in the ‘gemeinschaft’ sense refers to a geographical locality in which people live and work and where they develop close-knit relationships based on common concerns. Underpinning this sense of interrelatedness is a common social class and identity and common purpose of a people who subscribe to shared norms, moral codes, beliefs and attitudes.

A community exists when a group of people perceives common needs and problems, acquires a sense of identity, and has a common set of objectives.

Roberts (cited in Brookfield 1983, p.63).

A ‘gemeinschaft’ community is identified as a harmonious community (Brookfield, 1983, p.67). This model of community, however, fails to recognise that communities are characterised by differences in class, occupation, gender, race, wealth or poverty and have within them socio-economic inequalities. Gilchrist et al. (2010, p.8) explain

that “since the 1980s both communities and identities have become much more complex, fluid and diverse”.

The East Durham coalfield and North West Durham steel communities identified with this description of ‘*gemeinschaft*’ communities until de-industrialisation took place in the 1980s. These communities were once vibrant, working class communities where identity was constructed through work in the heavy industries, but de-industrialisation has diminished community life and fragmented identities.

Bulmer (cited in Warwick and Littlejohn, 1992, pp.34-35) describes industrial communities in County Durham as:

Close knit communities that showed solidarity in good and bad times given their shared socio-economic history and where each household offered a support kinship network to the extended family and neighbours.

David Jenkins, former Bishop of Durham (cited in Kearney, 1999, p. vii), explains what these communities have gone through in times of industrialisation and de-industrialisation:

A passive community of people...dependent on these industries for work and their homes and so could not raise their head above the parapet at work in case of losing their homes...they have experienced an immense amount of suffering...decent working men and women who, too often for no real fault of their own are subjected to grievous conditions, harassment, humiliation and personal misery.

Due to the closure of the industries, community solidarity in economic, social and cultural life was replaced with neoliberal ideologies of individualism and of looking after oneself at the expense of the collective good. Individualisation has brought about the illusion that individuals have been given the freedom and responsibility for constantly creating an identity; for this population, it is mostly through attendance at repetitive government training programmes, set up in order to supply a feminised, flexible workplace. Through the government’s Employability Skills Programme, the



unemployed are mandated to compete for insecure, non-unionised, poor quality, low waged work. A deficient labour market has sustained high levels of unemployment and this has created a culture of worklessness. Those who are part of this culture are not just the unemployed but also those who, through long-term unemployment, are now economically inactive and unable to work due to poor mental and physical health.

Foden et al. (2014, p.6-7) point out that, in County Durham, the figures for:

Those economically inactive are 87,200 (26.8%) and this includes 27,700 who are long term sick often due to the psychological effects of de-industrialisation and industrial diseases.

The communities within which the learners live are stigmatised as places of worklessness, as the percentage of the population that is dependent on welfare benefits is higher than the national average. In County Durham, 12.7% of residents are economically active and looking for work and claiming out of work benefits compared to a national average of 5.2%. In the areas of the county where this research study took place those who were experiencing worklessness and claiming out of work benefits was higher than the county average. North Durham had variations between its wards of 13% to 16%, with East Durham at 18%. (NOMIS County Durham Official Labour Market Profile for Durham, June 2015).

The economic and social conditions in these ex-coalfield and steel work communities of County Durham, 30 years on from the Miner's Strike (1984), show that poverty is endemic in this county. County Durham is the 62nd most deprived local authority in England out of 326 (ID2015). Within its wards it has 51% of local super output areas which are the most deprived pockets of deprivation across the county.

(Foden et al., 2014, p.26)

These communities are socially and physically decaying. One of the learners who was born into a mining village and has remained living there for over 30 years

comments on the social and physical decline of his community as living in a ‘black hole that is festered with rats’. As ex-coalmining families die off, their homes are used to rehouse impoverished families on welfare and those who have alcohol and drug addictions. These problems are spilling out into the wider community of the village, engaging children and young people in a drink and drugs culture. This new generation of unemployed people who have experienced the long term effects of de-industrialisation and economic decline no longer have working class values of having pride in the place where they live, and are contributing through an alcohol and drugs culture to the social and physical decay of these communities. According to Bauman (2001b, p.48) the phrase “‘closely knit community’” can no longer be used as nowadays it is missing, and its absence is reported as “a decline, a demise or eclipse of community”.

According to Seabrook (1984, p.112) these communities are no longer closely knit:

These communities that once housed working class industrial workers declined and deteriorated as families experienced income poverty, poor housing, and family breakdown.

A ‘gemeinschaft’ community had been a resource to enable individuals to find social support to turn their personal troubles into public concerns. These were places that offered the opportunity for shared interactions to occur which provided stability and reciprocity, but this was fragmented when de-industrialisation occurred and there was a loss of common solidarity that existed through trade unions, kinship and family life. As welfare claimants, these learners’ identities have become weakened and solitary in these times of transition, so that their individual problems do not become public concerns and they suffer alone.

Present day uncertainty is a powerful individualising force...as fears, anxiety and grievances are to be suffered alone...people are deprived of solidarity and collective action through trade unions.

(Bauman, 2001a, p.24)

Sennett (1998, p.138) argues that, “an unintended consequence of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place and aroused a longing for community”. Sennett claims the “hostile economic order”, with its insecure flexible working conditions, means that those who have no work and are unable to construct an identity are making people yearn for community life, where they can find emotional support from others. Bauman (2001b, p.1) likens the comfort of community life to “a roof under which we shelter in heavy rain, like a fireplace at which we can warm our hands on a frosty day”. Community is seen as a place of comfort and safety and giving a sense of belonging for those with little or no work – but not for all as these de-industrialised communities are places of high social and economic inequalities, of discomfort, of poverty, of social exclusion, and places where people are socially controlled through the welfare system. The women, who were once the backbone of these communities in their traditional reproductive roles, and who supported the industrial workers and provided kinship to kith and kin, no longer offer comfort to others as out of financial necessity they are found in a low paid, feminised workplace. Kearney (1990, pp.96-97) points out that this has “significantly reduced their contribution to community life”. These once ‘*gemeinschaft*’ communities have now become simply zones without a community.

The narratives of these learners living in former mining and steel working communities do not identify with Sennett’s and Bauman’s descriptions of community as having a feel good factor or being a pleasurable place to live. It is evident from the life stories of these learners that they live isolated and anxious lives as they work each day for their welfare benefit by complying with the conditional requirements of the Employability Skills Programme. They must take individual responsibility to meet the aims of this government programme, which is to become employable despite the broader context of a deficient labour market and other social conditions such as poor transport links which are not in their favour. None of these learners appeared to want to extend a hand of friendship to help their neighbours or the wider community. Individualism, looking after themselves rather than helping

others, and individualisation, creating an identity through repetitive training to become employable, is central to their thinking. The little freedom they have is curtailed by this thinking, as they know that if they are seen not to comply with the strict conditional requirements of welfare to work, they will be sanctioned and this will result in a loss of benefits and a referral to a food bank. Under such conditions these learners have taken on two opposing positions. The first is that they are resigned and do not oppose the conditional requirements of the welfare to work programme but conform to its requirements. Secondly, they are not in control of this situation but must bend to it, which leads to feelings of inner discontent at their oppressive situation. All learners in this study expressed feelings of ‘frustration’ and struggle at repeatedly having their time controlled and yet not becoming employable. Because of these opposing contradictions of bending to state power (the oppressor) and having feelings of not being in control of their situation, this has apparently resulted in the oppressed (the learners) adopting attitudes and behaviour more akin to that of their oppressor. In three cases of racial discrimination in this study the learners take on the role of the oppressor. They fail to recognise that their racial attitudes are directed towards those in similar circumstances to themselves as they too are on welfare and looking for work and are family men with children, but they treat these others differently, as they have an immigrant identity. In becoming the oppressor in this way these learners could be argued to have brought about “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1972, pp.32-44) at neighbourhood level. According to Bauman (2001b, pp.115-116) traditional ‘*gemeinschaft*’ communities are about “sameness and the absence of the other, especially a different other who by reason of their difference are out of place or generate fear to those in the community”.

One learner in this study was so deeply concerned that the arrival of outsiders with an Islamic faith could have an adverse effect on his family that he demonstrated against a small mosque being opened in a nearby village. Two other learners have expressed concern that Eastern European and ethnic minority people are being employed in an area of high unemployment when there are many local, white long-term unemployed people seeking work. One of these learners was opposed to immigration, as he believed immigrants to be taking all the jobs. Such oppression of

others who are not the same race, colour or religion as themselves gives way to “horizontal violence”. Horizontal violence is being victimised by the forces of vertical violence, as poor people oppress one another when an opportunity to oppress arises.

Vertical oppression is described as the top-to-bottom use of state power to control people through economic and social policies and practices that also seek to control the way people think, and thus behave (Freire, 1972, pp.32-44). The fear and anxiety generated through the strict and conditional requirements of the Employability Skills Programme creates an ideology of individualism and individualisation, of looking after oneself to ensure one creates an identity to become employable. If obtaining work is curtailed in any way (in this case these learners think that immigrants are taking their jobs) then the oppressed welfare claimant oppresses the other who is different from them.

According to Freire (1972, p.34):

The oppressor’s consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of domination...everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal ...including men.

These communities are places of the unfree, as they are mostly populated by those who are dependent on welfare benefit. Becoming employable and finding meaningful work is complex as the individual has been given, under the pretence of freedom, the responsibility to create an identity to become employable. The broader context of a deficient labour market, and other social conditions which are not in their favour, are not taken into account. It is only the individuals’ characteristics that are taken into account, and if they are not successful, it is their fault. All of these learners have been unemployed for between one and eight years but are constantly recycled and coerced by the state’s Employability Skills Programme that is not constructing an identity but reinforcing feelings of failure in these learners. Mike explains, ‘I think it affects my confidence in a few ways...before...I was raring to go. I don’t feel quite the same anymore because the opportunities are not there and there is no incentive’. Sean

explains he is becoming more socially excluded from the jobs market, and consequently may join what he describes as the ‘underside’ if he too remains unemployed for too long. Brian explains, ‘I am...going round in circles getting nowhere’.

Having an identity as a welfare claimant has resulted in them being subjected to political and media attention that does not give them respect, and increasingly marginalises them from society. They are seen to be responsible for being unemployed rather than the structural socio-economic conditions of the region. Despite their plight, and the socio-economic conditions of these communities, these learners have a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to their community where they have remained passive and silently loyal. These feelings of belonging are related to their identification with past struggles, and the legacy of the social and economic history of de-industrialisation into which they were born.

In this study men, in remaining passive and silently loyal, are not replacing their social function in the community by volunteering or through social action. Many explanations are given as to why those living in relative deprivation do not contribute to community life. Explanations such as a “decline in one’s neighbourhood and social fragmentation” (Van der Land & Doff, 2010, p.432) or a “breakdown in community factors of cultural norms of trust” (Lim and Laurence, 2015, p.319) are recorded. According to Lister (2004, p.149), the “structural and cultural context shapes the opportunities for the exercise of collective strategic agency”. However, the structural effects of de-industrialisation have fragmented community life and weakened individual and collective agency and broken down bonds of trust. These learners who were born around the time of the Miners’ Strike in 1985, have lived with the long term social and economic consequences and associated psychological effects of the closure of the coalfields and of the steel works. Bright (2010, p.47) points out that non-engagement in the former coalfield areas may be due to mistrust of the state that closed the pits. According to Verba et al. (cited in Lister 2004, p.149), “poverty and deprivation tend to be associated with lower levels of political and civic activity and collective action than among the wider population”. This can

encourage an ‘image’ of the poor as not engaging in activism when in fact they are “denied political agency, the capacity for activism and even the rights of citizenship” (Goode and Maskovsky, 2001, p.14).

Since 2008, austerity measures have increased poverty and deprivation through Welfare Reform that has reduced welfare benefits and cut local authority budgets. The latter has led to the breakdown of the public and voluntary organisational infrastructures that managed volunteer projects and engaged communities. The loss of this funding and infrastructure has denied these communities of opportunities to choose volunteer roles to engage in local activism. This may have deepened passivity and silence within these learners. Community solidarity in economic, social and cultural life has been replaced by a culture of individualism, which puts the onus on the individual to look after himself and not his neighbour.

Not only are the learners unable to construct their identity through work, they have become socially excluded in a social sense from their communities and they are not part of the consumer society that only belongs to those who are free to choose. Bauman (2001b, p.117) explains that communities where people are not free to choose are “real ghettos [this means] ...the denial of freedom and what goes with it is the absence of choice in a world of free choosers”.

According to Wacquant (2008, p.200), there is a strong connection between “place and dependency”. This is as relevant in former, rural de-industrialised areas of North East England as it is in the “banlieue” (the red belt) that spans the periphery of Paris, or Chicago’s “black belt” (Wacquant, 2008, p.203). All of these former industrial centres have experienced deregulation of the labour market, higher levels of poverty, joblessness and material hardship with large numbers of households’ dependent on welfare. Furthermore, the reduction or in some cases the “total abandonment” in public spending caused the decomposition of many of these neighbourhoods including their public and voluntary services (Wacquant, 2008, pp.218-226). These services are often sources of social capital for unemployed people that are essential

in helping them to find work and volunteer roles and their loss will contribute to the social isolation of unemployed people. According to Wacquant (2008, pp.218-226) this is an intentional political act of “planned shrinkage” of public spending on services. Where these former coal and steel communities differ from the “banlieue” and “black belt” communities is that they do not have street violence.

It was widely believed that the effect of mass long-term unemployment would be social disorder and violence. According to the Sunday Times Report 1985, the police are genuinely astonished, ‘We really thought’ said Chief Inspector Reid, ‘there’d be civil disorder problems after the closure. People were hurt and angry then, very angry. And then it was thought that trouble would come when the redundancy ran out a couple of years back. Well, it just hasn’t happened’.

(Kearney, 1990, p.91)

In summary, due to the deterioration of these communities and their services the life chances of these learners have been greatly reduced, and they have become marginalised from wider society. According to Wacquant (2008, p.25) “those living in these areas are stigmatized for residing in these decaying communities”. However, this research study shows that these learners, although frustrated with being socially controlled via enforced attendance on the Employability Skills Programme, do not have the resources to exit their deprived communities to find work or take up residence elsewhere for a better life. They are stuck and going nowhere. What this research study does show is that these learners have exited their community in a different way to that of Hirschman’s (1970, pp.2-29) understanding of exit. Hirschman perceived “exit” as making a clear-cut decision of “you leave or you do not leave”. All learners have exited or withdrawn from their community in a social sense by their non-participation to bring about social change or to help others.

The ghetto serves not as a reservoir of disposable industrial labour but as a mere dumping ground [for those for whom] the surrounding society has no economic or political use.

Wacquant (cited in Bauman, 2001b. p.119)



The following section explains how the learners have been ‘churned’ since leaving school to the point of being excluded from the labour market. As part of the ‘churning’ process they have now become fixed within a lifelong learning system for the unemployed that socially controls rather than liberates them.

## **Churning**

The narratives reveal that since leaving full time education these learners have weaved in and out of short-term, lifelong learning government programmes and short-term poor quality work. This has persisted throughout their working life. According to Shildrick (2015, p.7) ‘churning’ is where workless welfare claimants (those actively seeking work) “move in and out of low-paid, short-term jobs, and on and off benefits” but in these cases lifelong learning is also part of the churning process. Bauman (2001a, p.25) describes today’s workplace as a “camping site” where one spends an itinerant few days before being moved on.

The analysis of these learners’ lives shows a much deeper understanding of churning. These learners supply not only a precarious labour market that offers poor quality work that is low waged, non-unionised and insecure but as workless welfare claimants they have become a pool of cheap labour, to be called upon to supply the market when it dictates, and to be disposed of when no longer required. In doing so they are socially controlled by the state and capitalists.

Workless individuals who were formerly low paid when they return to employment it is to a similarly low level of earnings and insecure employment...this low-pay, no-pay cycle means that they find it difficult to escape low living standards and advance in the world of work.

(Thompson, 2015, p.4)

Churning through poor quality work creates a precarious existence, a life of poverty, poor mental health and no way out for these learners. Three of these learners suffer

from poor mental health. They express concern that no matter how hard they try they are going nowhere and blame themselves for their unemployed status.

According to Shildrick (2015, p.6) churning “does not provide stepping stones to something better, nor does it move people out of poverty’ Shildrick et al. (2010, p.1) explain that:

Insecurity of low-paid and low-quality work is the main reason why people shuttle between benefits and jobs which has become a predominant experience of working life for those living in deprived neighbourhoods.

Learners in this study have been workless and actively seeking work for between one and eight years since their last insecure job was terminated. According to Thompson (2015, p.4) “More than a third of low paid workers (38.4%) experience a period of worklessness over a four year period”. Five out of the six learners in this study have had a much more intense experience of ‘worklessness’, for an average of four to eight years. They have not even had the opportunity, during this period, to return to poor quality work. The learners have moved from being exploited in supplying the market through insecure work to being discarded - excluded from the market altogether. This has intensified poverty, anxiety, depression and mental anguish in the lives of these learners.

This production of human waste or ‘wasted humans’ – humans who are no longer necessary for the completion of the economic cycle and thus impossible to accommodate within a social framework resonant with the capitalist economy.

(Bauman 2004b, pp.40-41)

A contributing factor as to why five of these learners are churning since leaving school and into middle age may be due to all but one of these learners receiving a poor education and having negative experiences of school. However, it must be taken into account that the learner who had a positive experience of education and became a high achiever as a post-graduate, came from a middle class family that financed

him through public school and university education. Nevertheless, he is also churning and is rapidly losing his confidence. Four of the learners with negative experiences of education came from poor working class families who lived in wards of multiple deprivation. In total, four learners attended a comprehensive school, one attended a secondary modern school, and one attended a public school. The four learners who attended comprehensive schools left school with no qualifications and little confidence. These schools were to be found in very poor, disadvantaged wards in County Durham. None of these four learners found work for many years after leaving school in these de-industrialised areas. The learner who had attended a secondary modern school had a negative experience of school but gained some low level qualifications and found work immediately on leaving school, as he lived in a more affluent area at that time. Since moving to this de-industrialised area four years ago this learner has also been churned.

The comprehensive system was expected to bring hope to working class children who had in the past been segregated from their middle class counterparts at aged 11 by the 11+ examination into the secondary modern educational system. According to Reay (2006, p.303), testing results in “the fixing of failure in the working classes” from a young age. The new comprehensive system was seen as a meritocratic system whereby pupil success depended upon their abilities rather than their social class. It was expected to provide equality of opportunity in education to help working class children to become equal academically to their middle class peers. In the past they had been fixed through 11+ testing procedures and placed within a secondary modern system that had prepared working class children for manual work in industry. Reay (2006, p.303) points out that the educational system, in seeking to raise the achievement of all children, has continued to become preoccupied with ‘testing and assessment’ and this continues to position working class children with no academic success and in an insecure predicament on leaving comprehensive school.

The life stories of the four working class learners who attended the comprehensive system give testimony to this. They convey that they breathed a sigh of relief on leaving school. They all left with literacy difficulties and nothing of value in the way of qualifications. This indicates that these working class boys were in some of the lowest sets within their year group. Comprehensive education had continued to ‘fix’ these working class boys by the time they left school as having no value.

According to Reay (2006, p.300 & p.305), working class pupils in the context of schooling:

Inhabit a psychic economy of class defined by fear, anxiety and unease where failure looms large and success is elusive; a place where they are seen and see themselves as literally ‘nothing’ (p.305) ...The vast majority of...working class student’s [have]... a sense of educational worthlessness and feelings that they were not really valued and respected within education (p.300).

For Bourdieu (cited in Nash 1990, pp.431-437), “working-class children internalise their fate during the course of their education and see education as not relevant to them”. These schools, despite being sites within disadvantaged wards, did not appear to take into account the impact of socio-economic inequalities experienced by these working class boys and their families. The learners in this study, as young boys, experienced absent fathers working externally to the area, or unemployed fathers who remained at home and who were experiencing the psychological effects of de-industrialisation.

According to Pimlott (1981, p.51), the “speed of economic change” that took place from 1973 caused deprivation and “psychological problems” and a “loss of self-esteem” in North East industrial working class communities. Role reversal occurred as mothers went out to work to alleviate family poverty. According to Shipman et al. (cited in McKenzie and Damaris, 1982, p.179) in a study of women factory workers in three British factories, the combined roles of housewife, mother and worker lead to heavy demands on women as such work is “physically, mentally and emotionally

debilitating...and early to late shift work contributed to poor mental health''. These socio-economic changes have not always been healthy for family life as "violence, marital breakdown and mental health difficulties" often followed (Seabrook, 1982, pp.1-12).

According to Reay (2006, p.290) "within education, training and policy, classrooms are routinely presented as classless". The contemporary education system "retains powerful remnants of past" as we still have a middle class education system in which working class education is made to serve middle-class interests (Reay, pp.293-295). Schools continue to prepare the working class for low paid work rather than academic success. In the cases of these learners, all four had no short term work until they were in their twenties. On the other hand, the middle classes accrue cultural capital through gaining higher qualifications that can be converted for material reward throughout life.

Educational inequality (the unequal distribution of resources to schools in disadvantaged communities) can particularly be seen in the poor quality of teaching and a lack of understanding by teachers of the working class. This prevented these working class boys from achieving qualifications and shaping an identity upon leaving school. One of the learners attended a failing comprehensive (now closed) in one of the most deprived wards in the county. He noted that this was a place where neither students nor teachers wanted to attend. Henry claimed, 'the teachers were incompetent...they did not want to be there you know and they didn't hide the fact that they didn't want to be there...any more than the students'. This indicates that teachers had no understanding of working class lives, and that working class lives of young people were of little value to middle class teachers.

Reay points out that within the teaching profession there is:

No access to sociological and historical understanding of social class and in particular the positioning of the working classes within education, initial

teacher trainees are left ill- informed and, I would argue, ill-equipped to broach, let alone tackle, the greatest problem the education system faces: that of working class educational underachievement, alienation and disaffection.

(Reay, 2006, p.307)

By not addressing social class and failing to adequately resource the educational needs of working class pupils, schools reproduce inequalities rather than eliminate them.

Historically, the working class has always been constructed as the inferior “other” within education (Reay, 2006, p.295). Their education was seen by politicians and the elite alike as only being of use to the economic interests of country rather than really benefitting the lives of the children.

The schooling of the working classes was always to be subordinate and inferior to that of the bourgeoisie; a palliative designed to contain and pacify rather than to educate and liberate (Smith cited in Reay, 2006, p.294).

The education system in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the comprehensive schooling that these boys attended, retained powerful elements of 19<sup>th</sup> century education for the working classes. These comprehensives were places where working class boys were socially controlled rather than taught really useful knowledge that would develop knowledge that would prove useful in helping them to have a wider understanding of the world, and how to bring about social change to address the socio-economic inequalities within their communities on leaving school. Instead, they were given useful knowledge which was associated with providing an education in basic literacy skills of IT, literacy, numeracy and communication for a newly emerging, precarious service sector economy. The boys were born and educated on the cusp of de-industrialisation and this newly emerging economy. Their education in the comprehensive system had ill-prepared them for these significant economic changes and how they could orientate a way through the maze of short-termism in lifelong learning and short-term, poor quality work that has now resulted in them being socially excluded from the labour market. Education in the comprehensive system, as

experienced by these boys, has not been an equaliser in making them equal to their middle class peer group, but has left them with nothing in the way of qualifications or confidence to make their way into the labour market, or rebuild their communities through active citizenship. Instead they have been squeezed out of the labour market into long-term unemployment, and they make no contribution to community life.

Mahony & Hextall (cited in Reay, 2006, p.293) point out that there are disputes over the teaching of “really useful knowledge” for different groups of students, based on their gender, ethnicity and social class.

We still have an education system in which working class education is made to serve middle-class interests...regardless of what individual working-class males and females are able to negotiate and achieve for themselves within education, the collective patterns of working-class trajectories remain sharply different from those of the middle classes, despite over a hundred years of universal state schooling. It is not surprising then that education for the working classes has traditionally been about failure.

(Reay 2006, p.296)

Despite the rise of mass credentialism (the belief that qualifications are the best measure of the ability to do a job and means of obtaining material rewards), none of these four learners had achieved qualifications on leaving school. They have, however, been the most affected by the contemporary culture of mass credentialism through mandatory attendance at repetitive government programmes to achieve low-level qualifications. These working class boys, when attending the comprehensive system, were treated as outsiders by a middle class educational system, but in adulthood they have now moved position to become “outcasts on the inside” (Bourdieu and Champagne cited in Reay, 2006, p.298). This is where those who are marginalised, such as these learners, are socially controlled through a privatised system of lifelong learning:

The education system is turning into a permanent home for potential outcasts and similarly the current move towards capitalist privatised education in England is consuming the working classes rather than the other way round. Such processes, far from being meritocratic and geared towards rewarding working-class talents, skills and abilities are a continuation of the historical processes of containment and pacification.

(Reay 2006, p.298)

The learners work hard to keep a positive attitude throughout the churning process otherwise coercive and disciplinary action will be taken against them. The strict and conditional requirements of welfare are a cause of their anxiety. They remain motivated and committed in their struggle to find (in) secure work, no matter how frustrated they feel, but the low level qualifications achieved through these training programmes do not help to move these learners into work and out of poverty. Shildrick and Rucell (2015, p.1) point out that “people’s social class positions still influence the opportunities open to them...starting out in life in poverty means a greater risk of poverty in later life”.

Also, a deficient local labour market that offers few opportunities and is controlled by private employment agencies simply perpetuates the cycle of insecure, poor quality work that leads to poverty. As these learners have been unemployed and not engaged even in insecure work for the last one to eight years, and only engaged in a continued cycle of government programmes, they have become marginalised and socially disadvantaged and do not even belong as a social group with the working poor in insecure, low-waged work. They have gone beyond churning and have become socially excluded from the economy. According to Byrne (1999, pp.92-93) poor quality work causes the most significant kind of “social exclusion in our society”.

Due to the levels of relative poverty they live in, they have become “socially inefficient”. This means that due to their income, based on welfare benefits, which is too small by acceptable income standards in a consumer society to become a consumer, they own few possessions for the basic necessities of life (Abel-Smith and



Townsend, cited in Bauman, 1988, p.85). For example, none of the learners in this sample owns a car, nor do they have sufficient money to given them the freedom to travel out of deprived areas to find work, or to buy essential food at cheaper prices. They do not have the money to join in and engage with the civic, voluntary, social and cultural activities of their communities, and as a consequence of this their voices are not heard. Relative poverty is defined as:

A standard of living so low that it excludes people from the community in which they live...what renders them “socially inefficient” is not only an inadequate means of livelihood but also the fact that the state of heteronomy and intrusive bureaucratic regulation sets them apart from other members of the community who are free and autonomous. The most salient aspect of living in poverty is the withdrawal of the poor from social interaction, the tendency to break old social bonds, to escape from public places into one’s own home, which now serves as a place to hide from the real or imagined threat of communal condemnation or ridicule or pity.

Donnison (cited in Bauman, 1988, p.85)

These learners have become not just excluded from the economy, but due to the relative poverty within which they live, they have also been excluded from their community. According to Wolff (et al 2015, p.3) relative poverty is defined as not allowing one to “take part in the normal or encouraged activities of one’s society”. Therefore, these learners have been socially excluded from equal participation in community activities. These factors have resulted in them exiting from their community in a social sense. They remain silently loyal and passive in their communities but give nothing back to the community. The state, in not showing loyalty to them by providing meaningful work and a living wage, is receiving no return except by mandating them to work for their welfare benefits to keep the taxpayer happy.

Living in poverty in these deprived communities, the learners deviate from the norm in society as the norm is to be a consumer, and this sets them apart from the rest of society, which is free to consume. They have all experienced the social isolation of being at home for long periods of time (which often causes family disputes) before

recycling back into the next government programme which, despite its disciplinary approach and how 'frustrated' it makes them feel, offers social inclusion and brings routine back into their lives. They fail to recognise the way the state and capitalism, through lifelong learning and a precarious economy, socially controls their lives, and how unfree and trapped they have really become by these dominant structural forces that are outside of their control.

Neoliberal economic policies have caused neo-liberal economic insecurity and structural worklessness that is characterised by a non-cyclical lack of jobs...now associated with poverty and social exclusion that is mostly concentrated among those with lower incomes, education and skills...it increases the chances of poor health...including increased likelihood of morbidity and mortality, including higher rates of poor mental health and suicide...they suffer from greatly reduced income and many live in relative poverty against a background of rising prices for such essentials as food and transportation...its psychosocial effects are stigma, isolation and loss of self-worth...with around one in four men report feelings of shame related to unemployment.

(Schrecker and Bambra, 2015, pp.57-59)

In conclusion, lifelong learning is increasingly positioned as the solution for the working classes to become employable. This is a contradiction as repetitive and coercive government programmes subordinate and discipline these working class learners. Being churned, they find that there is no way into meaningful work and no way out of poverty. The social class and the structural socio-economic inequalities they experience have not been taken into account either through the comprehensive education system or through the government's Employability Skills Programme. These learners are now identified as 'outsiders on the inside' in a lifelong learning system that socially controls rather than liberates them. There is a continuum for working class boys in de-industrialised areas between the comprehensive system and the Employability Skills Programme that has fragmented their identities so that they remain fixed in these de-industrialised places and do not cross over into work or out of poverty, or cross over from being working class to middle class with all the privilege this brings. They have only 'exited' in a social sense from non-participation in community life.

The following section explains that as part of the churning process the learners are subjected to electronic surveillance techniques to monitor their progress in finding work. They are also subjected to coercive methods through psychological interventions that aim to bring about attitudinal behavioural changes in learners who must develop ‘appropriate attitudes’ to achieve employability.

### **Surveillance**

As the learners are not consumers but deprived welfare claimants they are not free to do as they please.

The narratives reveal that the learners are not free to choose what education and training centre they attend, nor are they free to identify programmes that meet their individual education and training needs. Failure to participate in the programme may result in sanctioning which results in full or partial loss of welfare benefits.

The neoliberal state seeks to promote the freedom of individuals to determine their own fate. This is particularly seen through welfare reform where unemployed individuals are constructed as active jobseekers responsible for finding work. This is closely monitored through government sources.

This freedom to act is regulated by an array of government forces including think tank intellectuals and jobcentre and Department for Work and Pensions managers who monitor and scrutinize his or her conduct on a daily basis.

Barratt (cited in Danson et al. 2015, p.286)

Not only are these vulnerable learners surveilled electronically while in attendance at the Employability Skills Programme and Job Centre interviews but they are also subject to coercive methods through psychological interventions that will bring about attitudinal behavioural changes in learners, who must have work appropriate attitudes to achieve employability.

Eligibility for welfare benefits in neoliberal societies is dependent on unemployed and underemployed people, carrying out job search, training for work and work preparation activities as well as mandatory unpaid labour known as workfare...increasingly these activities include psychological interventions to modify attitudes, beliefs and personality through the imposition of positive affect.

(Friedli and Stern, 2015, p.40)

The learners, in attending government programmes, are demoralised as any symptom they display such as a negative disposition, depression or de-motivation due to long term unemployment and constant rejection by employers, must be corrected through compulsory, coercive methods of 'positive affect'. 'Positive affect' is implemented through "psychological interventions that aim to modify cognitive function or emotional disposition" (Friedli and Stern, 2015, p.42). It is believed that such interventions will change behaviours to enable this most vulnerable group of learners to obtain work, which is a paradox given the market failure in these geographical areas.

These psychological interventions in the case of the learners in this study have not increased their chances of entering (in) secure work. What they have done is to increase feelings of failure in the learner by shifting the understanding of unemployment as not caused by market failure but due to the personal failure of the learner whose attitude and behaviour has not been positive enough to find work. The learners constantly blame themselves for not being in work as they have been given the impression that they are psychologically deficient. These learners are very far away from the labour market due to having been unemployed for four to eight years. The aim of these programmes is for the learner to take responsibility to find a job. In the case of the learners this has been unattainable due to market failures and inflexibility of the workplace. The programme is reinforcing anxiety and reducing wellbeing in this group of learners.

The mandatory and relentless job search activities undertaken by these learners, to meet government targets for applications to work within 30 miles of their home is a

humiliating experience for them. They receive a constant stream of rejection letters and in most cases do not even receive a reply. They must electronically submit all applications they make via the Job Search government website for the government to electronically surveil their progress at a distance and then be called to interview to give an explanation of their outcomes. This has induced anxiety amongst these learners as if they do not provide satisfactory accounts of why they remain unemployed they may be sanctioned and lose welfare benefits.

In conclusion, this poor and vulnerable group of learners must accept responsibility for their own failure if they do not secure a meaningful life. In this context, the meaning of exit from unemployment has more negative connotations as these learners who are living in depressed labour market areas are caught up in a “welfare regime that has penalties and conditions that reduces the agency or ability of those on benefit to act to find meaningful work” (Bennett cited in Danson, 2015, p.287). According to Wacquant (2009, p.79), the state has become “a disciplinary state” rather than a “welfare state”, especially for the most vulnerable in society.

The following section explains that one of the effects of de-industrialisation is the loss of social and collective identities. Being given the individual responsibility and freedom to create an identity has been an illusion for these learners. Social exclusion from the labour market means they have come to be denied an identity associated with work.

## **Identity**

Working class men, employed in the “cradle to grave” traditional industries (Friedman and Friedman, 1980, p.158), shaped their identities through work as steel workers and coalminers. Such collective identities were weakened by the economic “shock treatment” (Friedman cited in Kline, 2008, p.8) meted out to the working class through de-industrialisation, and the re-configuration of the newly emerging economy to favour employers rather than employees. According to Byrne (1995,

pp.95-115), the effects of de-industrialisation brought about “social spatial differentiation” that led to a re-configuration of class composition and social relations due to the altered position of the working class in the labour market. This resulted in future generations of working class men having to construct their own identity rather than inherit a collective identity by following their fathers into heavy industry.

The learners cited here belong to this future generation and struggle to construct an identity in precarious times. According to Marx (cited in Bauman, 2004a, p.40) the class to which one belonged was the “principal determining factor of social identity”. It had been thought that the social class which one had inherited and to which one belonged would provide a lasting legacy on one’s social identity. These learners’ identities have been fractured by structural economic change, the decline of traditional industries and the fragmentation of communities that were once dependent upon them. Unlike their fathers, who had solid identities, their identities have been broken due to structural changes. They have little control in choosing an identity in precarious times.

Personal identity is “a definition and evaluation of oneself in terms of idiosyncratic personal attributes” (Hogg and Tindale, 2005, p.142). Social identity is “a definition and evaluation of oneself in terms of shared attributes that define membership of the specific group one belongs to” (Hogg and Tindale, 2005, p.142). Where personal identity is tied to the personal self, social identity is tied to the collective self where an individual contributes as a member of a group. In the past their social identity would have been tied into collective action through trade unions for workers’ rights. However, the social reality is that the learners in this study have been left with a weak social identity as their daily communication is only with groups of welfare claimants who, like themselves, are being churned through the Employability Skills Programme.

These learners now find themselves in circumstances not of their own choosing in panopticon conditions within the Employability Skills Programme, and where

collective action to bring about social change in their shared circumstances is prohibited. They have little agency in choosing an identity as they are churned through the Employability Skills Programme to supply a flexible labour market only to find that even this labour market no longer requires them. The life stories reveal that no matter how many repetitive employability skills courses they attend, and no matter how many low-level vocational qualifications they achieve, they are unable to gain entry into a competitive but deficient labour market where the learners compete for few jobs. These learners' identities are being shaped by the long-term effects of de-industrialisation that has atomised their communities; a poor education; a precarious economy that creates insecurity through flexibility of the workplace; and a strict welfare state that works closely with lifelong learning to ensure that they are socially controlled. These factors are breeding insecurity, anxiety and poor mental health in these learners. Everything is now short-term and this corrodes people's character for the following reasons:

The most confusing thing about flexibility is its impact on personal character...the meaning of 'character' is the ethical value we place on our own desires and on our relations with others. Horace writes, that the 'character of a man depends on his connections to the world'...character particularly focuses upon the long term aspect of the emotional experience...it is expressed by loyalty and mutual commitment, or through the pursuit of long term goals...character is concerned with the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others.

(Sennett, 1998, p.10)

The learners are not in a position as Heath et al., (2009, p.22) suggests to "choose their own life world and biographies" as this is for the elite and not the working classes.

"Embedded individualization" seen as freeing people from the routine of work as in the days of "heavy modernity" has brought about the illusion of individual responsibility and individual freedom of choice to create one's own identity. This freedom, as we have seen through the life stories, has not provided the learners with educational and economic opportunities to construct an identity. Their fate is being

determined by structural changes in the economy that have brought about socio-economic inequalities, and now they have a lifetime “task” of constantly constructing an identity (Bauman cited in Hall and du Gay, 2012, p.19). Individuals must be fluid in working to keep an identity otherwise they will become excluded from the workplace. They have fully complied with the requirements of the Employment Skills Programme so that they have the appropriate characteristics to present to employers.

There are those who are free to choose their identity and those who are unfree, who will be unable to choose an identity. The problem for the free is not only how to construct one’s identity, but how to keep it, thus not having to be “recycled” in finding a new identity (Bauman cited in Hall and du Gay 2012, p.18). Constructing and sustaining an identity causes fear and anxiety in the individual. Failure may result in a stigmatising identity of a welfare claimant, as these learners have been labelled. As welfare claimants they have entered the world of the unfree as they have been unable to sustain an economic identity and become a consumer. In attempting to regain an economic identity through the Employability Skills Programme any choice of a future identity is denied, as it is imposed by others who are in positions of power.

Individual responsibility, freedom and choice are not an option for these learners who are apportioned blame by politicians and the media for not constructing an identity in becoming employable:

Identity is only revealed to us as something to be invented rather than discovered; as a target of an effort, ‘an objective’; as something one needs to build from scratch...and then to struggle for and then to protect through yet more struggle...the truth of the precarious...forever incomplete status of identity.

(Bauman, 2004a, p.15-16)

The question surrounding the identity of these learners is, do they belong to the precarious or to the underclass? According to Bauman (2004b, p.39) “the underclass



are people who have been denied the right to claim an identity''. One of the learners explained that he thought he had moved into the world of the underclass once he entered the Employability Skills Programme. He felt that he was surrounded by people who had been socially excluded from work and society. He described such social exclusion as being part of the "underclass" whereas a precarious existence is one where:

Individuals who have insecure employment and jobs of only a limited duration with minimal labour protection and no sense of a secure occupational identity are known as the 'precariat'. Their lives are defined by short-termism and insecurity which could evolve into a mass incapacity to think long term, induced by the low probability of personal progress or building a career or social mobility...the precariat lives with anxiety... are insecure in the mind and stressed, at the same time underemployed.

(Standing, 2011, p.12)

These learners have a fractured identity due to the long-term effects of de-industrialisation. This broken identity has been unable to be healed due to poor education, a deficient labour market, and a life-long learning system that churns and socially controls the learners by working within a strict and conditional welfare system that disciplines rather than nurtures broken people back to health. The learners do fit Standing's characteristics of a precariat identity. However, their narratives reveal that they have gone beyond being precariat as they fit Bauman's description of those who have been "denied the right to claim an identity". They have been totally excluded from the economy for the last one to eight years and assigned to being churned through welfare to work programmes. Due to the relative poverty within which they live, they are excluded from the consumer society and also their community. Relative deprivation prevents them from taking part in the wider civic, social and cultural activities of the community; however, their narratives give testimony to self-exclusion from community life in a social sense. None of the learners participate in formal or informal volunteer activities to bring about social change, and thus do not wish to help others in any way. Consequently, their voices are not heard in these socially and physically decaying communities. Not only have

they been “denied the right to claim an identity” (Bauman, 2004b, p.39), but as they have no voice they are also the “missing in their communities” (Bauman, 2001b, p.149).

## **Conclusion**

An analysis of the effects of the de-industrialisation on the lives of these learners reveals that they are living in stigmatised communities and that they are dependent on welfare and repetitive employability skills training. These once ‘*gemeinschaft*’ communities that had a common purpose through their dependency upon coal and steel production have become ghettos as they house some of the most socially excluded people in society. Ghettos are places where people are not free to choose an identity, or become a consumer, or partake in civic life due to the level of relative poverty they experience. People who live in ghettos are set apart from the rest of society who are able to consume.

De-industrialisation that freed people from the routine of work was followed by an ideology that individuals had a responsibility to construct an identity, and were free to choose an identity. In the past, schools fed their working class, non-achieving pupils into the manual labour market as cheap labour for the coal mining and iron and steel industrialists but due to de-industrialisation these learners did not even have this opportunity. Instead, they became part of a continuum of lifelong learning that socially controls the unemployed in these areas. It is expected that they will create an identity through their repetitive attendance at employability skills training offering very low-level vocational qualifications; however, a deficient labour market and the negative attitudes of employers’ work against them.

Rather than the government working on the attitudes of employers towards the unemployed, unemployed learners on the Employability Skills Programme are subjected to psychological interventions expected to bring about the attitudinal behavioural changes deemed necessary to achieve employability. Blame is

apportioned to the learner for not gaining employment. A deficient labour market and other social conditions are not taken into consideration. Their time is controlled and surveilled through panopticon electronic systems with the aim of rectifying their skills deficits and ensuring they comply with the psychological coercive methods of ‘positive affect’ that ensure these learners remain highly motivated in pursuing the few economic opportunities that exist in this depressed labour market area. Their time is being wasted as there is evidence to suggest that government programmes do not achieve success in finding jobs for their learners, given the market failure in these geographical areas (Freidli and Stearn 2015, pp.40-47).

The stories reveal that these learners are not individually or collectively connected to the wider community through social, civic and cultural activities. This is partly due to relative deprivation but also because they have withdrawn or ‘exited’ in a social sense from these communities that have become socially fragmented. Their awareness of the decline in their community has contributed to them having a lack of responsibility towards others. As a consequence of no work (except through attendance at the Employability Skills Programme), and no engagement in the community to bring about change for others, they lead very solitary lives. They continue their lives by being churned through government programmes but they are no longer churned into poor quality short-term work as they have been socially excluded from this. As working class boys, when attending comprehensive education they were treated as outsiders by a middle class educational system. In adulthood, they have now moved position to become outside of the labour market and have become firmly fixed within lifelong learning as “outcasts on the inside” (Bourdieu and Champagne cited in Reay, 2006, p.298).

Through the government programmes they struggle with the task of building an identity that has so far been denied them. They do not seek to challenge the state that has created such poor socio-economic conditions in these places but continue to comply with the requirements of the government’s Employability Skills Programme. As Freire (1985, p.186) points out “without a sense of identity, there is no need for

struggle”.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Analysis Ontological Insecurity**

#### **Introduction**

Ontological insecurity is the hidden outcome of de-industrialisation that increases anxiety within a population. I explore how the closure of traditional industries brought about the disintegration of kinship networks that were essential in providing mutual aid and emotional support to contain anxiety in an industrial population in times of uncertainty; the loss of traditional gender roles and how these roles became restructured to meet the requirements of a neo-liberal labour market and redefined family life; how de-industrialisation was not a one off historical event but an ongoing process that continued to define and devalue lives; and how subjectification by political elites and the media, who circulated demeaning opinions and judgement, further devalued working class lives. I illustrate how devaluation has been resisted by learners, and through redemptive stories I explain how the learners have re-claimed their respectability through community adult education.

In this chapter ‘subjectification’ is used in a negative way whereby powerful groups undermine people’s sense of identity. This is different to the way in which it used in Chapter 3 by Biesta who envisages the individual, through education, will become an ‘independent thinker’.

#### **Organisation of chapter**

This chapter is organised according to the key theme of ontological insecurity and the themes of destruction of kinship networks, restructuring of gender roles, and devalued lives. This develops the argument of how ontological insecurity is a hidden outcome of de-industrialisation. These themes have emerged from the analysis of the eight life stories. The following individual cases are drawn from learners attending community adult education either in the former East Durham coalfield or in the former North West Durham coalfield areas of County Durham.

## **Life History Stories**

### **Theresa**

Theresa was a young child when the colliery closed in her village. She remembers that the closure caused, ‘a sense of loss across the community’. Growing up in this community, Theresa witnessed a significant economic and cultural shift taking place that disintegrated the life of this mining village.

She describes what happened:

I remember very much a community and we all looked after one another and knew each other and that was the sad thing to be quite honest when the mine went the community went and a loss of social structure of the community...and the loss of people's livelihoods. People wanted to work and there was no work for them and they were demoralised. The culture has changed now from a working culture to a benefit type culture but people want to work. [Today] there is greater inequality as...there is a divide between the people in work and the people out of work. There is not the sense of community that there used to be as people now keep themselves to themselves...but the whole culture has changed now.

At age 11 she also experienced segregation from her primary school classmates by the 11 plus that defined children's presumed ability at a very young age. This separation and rejection at such a young age caused her to have low self-esteem and a lack of confidence throughout her life. She left secondary school with no qualifications as childhood poverty, lack of parental support, and poor education in her formative years all had a damaging impact on any educational success that she was capable of achieving, and limited her life chances. Theresa remembers:

My education was very negative I...didn't pass the 11 plus and that was something that scarred me for life in a way but me family did not have aspirations for me it was always me brothers...I knew I could do better.

The lack of economic opportunities for men in the area caused role reversal in her marital home and she became the main 'breadwinner'. She recalls, 'my husband just picked up jobs when he could'. Theresa, like many women of her generation, came to shoulder multiple roles of responsibility as a wife, worker and mother of two children. Theresa explains, 'my son has mental health problems'. Theresa reflected on a major life-changing event in her life:

I had a breakdown...I had really lost all confidence. I was getting divorced and I was on the sick from work and I...packed me job in. I had left me marital home...and [was] socially isolated. I was very low and I had no self-esteem and no confidence. I was on...anti-depressants.

Theresa freed herself from her marriage as part of this life changing experience and took control of herself with support from the women's education centre. Theresa recalls, 'me dad thought I was stupid for going back into education at that stage in me life'. She dissociated herself from this male dominance by refusing to accept his remarks and proceeded to prove him wrong. Theresa identified the main barrier to her participation as 'my educational background'.

With the support and guidance of committed tutors Theresa was able to identify her learning needs and began to engage in a mix of second chance education and community based informal learning for personal and social development. In the company of women at the centre she was able to share her feelings and concerns and review what was happening in her life. Theresa has achieved long awaited qualifications that have enabled her to take a different career path. She recalls her learning journey:

When I first started I did nothing academic I did all interest courses. Aromatherapy, the New Me Course and confidence building courses. Therapeutic courses for a couple of years and when I got my confidence back I did Maths and English at 'O' level at college to bring me up to some sort of standard. I continued to study at the college and achieved the Counselling level 2 qualification and then I went up there to do my Certificate in Education so I could be a tutor at the centre.

The curriculum and support service offered at the Women's Education Centre has enabled Theresa to manage problems arising from her own set of personal circumstances and poor education but also from the legacy of socio-economic structural changes that have affected this community causing poverty, insecurity and poor mental health in family life.

Theresa has found a different aspect of community life within the Women's Education Centre, which is a safe place for women not just to learn but also to share their personal problems in a collective way. This is a place to which Theresa has shown loyalty by offering the following services to women with poor mental health. She explains:

It was such a community (the centre) that had given me so much and so I wanted to support it. I did the drop in service through offering one to one mentoring support, listening service as it had enhanced my life. Now I have a job which is satisfying to me as I support other women who have difficulties. I am a tutor and I teach Counselling and Personal Development and I have undertaken volunteer work in the Mental Health Sector.

From being cast off at aged 11 due to the 11 plus examination, Theresa's story has been one of struggle to overcome rejection and prove her full potential. She claims community adult education has given her a new self-belief, 'I now know who I am [and] I don't feel inferior at all to anybody'.

## **Cathy**

Cathy was born into a community that was dependent on both coal and steel production. She lived through times of industrial strife, including the closure of the steel works (1980) and the Miners' Strike (1985). Her recollection of this time was, 'everything went from technicolour to black and white...I did see some awful things'.

Cathy is a lone parent with two children, one of whom has a disability. Cathy is in receipt of meagre welfare benefits to help cover her financial costs. Cathy's childhood and formative years were shaped by a controlling and violent alcoholic

father. She recalls the patriarchal oppression that existed within the community and in her family life especially after the mines closed:

Everything went from technicolour to black and white...there was a lot of drunks and there was a lot of beating of wives and there was a lot of fear...me dad...he was a very violent alcoholic...[and] a gambler, me dad beating me mother up regularly...me mam and dad split up which was quite uncommon then...my mam killed herself when I was nineteen.

Now 50 years of age, Cathy explains these past experiences have caused her to have poor mental health, 'from being 20 I first went to get help [from mental health services]. I suffer from depression'.

Despite these volatile family circumstances Cathy was an achiever and passed the 11 plus for entry to the local grammar school. Her time in secondary education was not a happy one but academically it was a positive experience as it provided her with a good education that enabled her to achieve 'O' and 'A' level qualifications. Teaching staff made her 'feel valued', but as a working-class girl she did not increase in confidence as 'I didn't feel like the other [middle-class] girls who were major confident'. She experienced bullying at school from her middle class peers due to her coming from a pit village. She recalls how she felt 'put down' by their comments, 'God you are not from the Moor...you didn't come from there did ya'.

Her turbulent home life and working class family background had not prepared her for entry to grammar school where she met and felt inferior to children from middle class backgrounds. They made her feel 'a lesser person'. On leaving school she attended a local polytechnic where she felt 'out of her depth...I did not think I was as good as them' but withdrew due to her mother's suicide.

Cathy's life has replicated her mother's troubled life of a violent relationship, marital breakdown and mental health difficulties. She explains:

My first boyfriend was very like my father, [he was] violent [and] gambled...[he put me in] hospital several times...I was married [to another



man] for 20 years. I had alcoholism [for] about 10 years. My husband did not hit me but he was very emotionally abusive and constantly put me down...when he left me I lost the plot. I have got two children and one of them has Asperger's [syndrome] and it was [a] bad two and a half years so I did seek help [for mental health] then cos I lost it.

Deterioration in her mental health caused Cathy to seek support at a local women's education centre. This she explains was a time when, '[I] hated myself and wanted to love myself, [and] build my confidence that's why I came'. She describes the centre as a 'capsule' [a safe place] where she has re-engaged with learning for the last 5 years. Cathy explains that community- based informal learning for personal and social development courses in addition to volunteer training have changed her outlook on life:

Before attending adult education when I was in conversation with anyone I would think that they would see me as inferior to them but since attending adult education I have been educated to know that I am on a level playing field to everyone I come into contact with and I now recognise that I have value and a reason for being here as I am now valuable in other people's lives which I did not feel before...it's changed my life. When I came in here...I assumed people hated me...5 years later...I know people don't automatically hate me.

As a single parent Cathy is caught up in the welfare benefits trap that has increased her anxiety:

You keep getting letters...“we are going to take it off you” and you are terrified when you walk into your home in case the letter is on the doormat...it is in your mind all of the time...[at assessment interview] I wish they would say this woman is doing her best here she is doing voluntary, she is doing education...but they don't.

Cathy anxiously awaits the arrival of the brown envelope in the post from the Job Centre. This will be to invite her to interview to discuss moving her from claiming sickness benefit to Job Seekers Allowance. This could change her life as the conditionality attached to claiming JSA will call for mandatory attendance on welfare to work programmes which will prevent her attendance at the women's education centre.

She explains community adult education as having been a lifeline when she was in crisis:

I would have gone under...it has saved my life back then and that's no exaggeration, I believe my children may have ended up in care if not for community adult education.

As a loyal volunteer at the women's centre she now offers a drop in Listening Service to other women learners who are experiencing poor mental health.

## **Lily**

Lily is 59 years of age and was born into a community that was dependent on the local coke works that closed down in 1980. Lily married in 1980 and moved to a mining community with her husband for work. Within five years of their marriage Lily and her husband experienced the effects of the Miners' Strike (1985).

Lily describes what happened to the men when work disappeared:

[It] put a lot of people [men] out of work... a big part of your identity as a man is what you do ...and when you take that away from men it is different for them ...[for] men it is difficult to find where you fit [in] if you haven't got your job. [Men] have other things like the club...you can spend a lot of time in the club...you have a few pints of beer with your marris in the afternoon...I don't think people realise they are getting into the habit [alcoholism] before it's too late...but [for] men it is difficult to find where you fit [in] if you haven't got your job.

Lily explains that the government's political and economic policies have deeply affected her family life and not for the good:

Financially...it has affected me because of the lack of work. My husband has been in and out of work for most of me married life. I got married the year after Maggie Thatcher came in...it was just starting then [lack of work and unemployment] and it has not got any better. I have had to manage on low income or on benefit for most of my married life so it has been difficult.

She reflects on the long-term effects of economic decline:

There is a whole generation [locally] who I know have never worked and have been on benefit all their lives. There is a whole generation that has no hope.

Lily is dyslexic and due to poor education this was never identified at school. She left school unable to spell, but was able to read thanks to her love of 'Enid Blyton books'. It was not until her 10-year-old son was assessed as dyslexic that she spoke to the educational psychologist about her difficulty with spelling, and how she hid her inability to spell. Lily recalls her school days as being negative, and describes how she was treated:

At school I was always treated as if I was thick and always thought of myself as thick. When I was 7 we had to write a diary a day at school and for a week I spelt 'last night' as 'nite'. The teacher kept pulling me about it. I couldn't understand why it is 'night' and to me there was no 'gh' in it. It came to the point where I was sent to the Head [as the teacher] thought I was being obstructive and uncooperative [as] I should know how to spell. [I was] just stuck at the back of the class with the raffia [less able pupils]. I can remember all me books going away to be assessed from Junior School they came back and I never heard any more about it...it was always a struggle.

Lily was cast off as having little worth at the age of 11, as she did not pass the 11 plus that defined a child's presumed ability at a young age. Being judged at school from such a young age she has lived with these past damaging educational experiences until she returned to learning quite by chance at the age of 53 years.

She engaged with the women's education centre when a social worker recommended that her niece who was suffering from alcoholism might benefit from attending the centre. Lily was the primary carer for her niece and in transporting her to the centre to attend a course she too became an adult learner. Lily engaged with learning for the first time since leaving school. She recollects this earlier part of her learning journey, describing it as a mix of community based informal learning and second chance education. She observed, it was a different experience to that which she had at school:

The first thing I ever [did] was Computers for Beginners and then Supportive Listening. I did Counselling Level 1 and level 2 and then I went to college and did level 3...it is such a nice atmosphere it doesn't feel like school. This girl who left school at 15 and is dyslexic [who] had no interest in academia at all in fact it terrified me...6 years of coming here I can spell better now.

Lily's counselling qualifications have enabled her to increase in confidence and gain skills to become a volunteer counsellor to the Emotional Wellbeing Group at the women's centre. She explains, 'a lot of people come to me who have substance misuse issues like alcohol or drugs...I just try to give back a bit that's all...so it is enriching my life'.

As a volunteer counsellor Lily has shown loyalty to the women's centre that has provided her with a positive learning experience. It has helped her overcome the fearful memories of her school days and challenge her dyslexia difficulties that have been a barrier to her moving forward in life. Lily reflects:

I know myself very well now...it has changed my life 100% ...I am more confident than I was. Achieving to level 3 for somebody who left school at 15 [without qualifications] you know it is a good thing and I rave about this place whoever I talk to.

## **Maureen**

Maureen was born into a family of ten children who lived on a deprived council estate in the coalfield area. She was the only one in her family to make it to grammar school. She reflects on the lack of parental interest in her education compared to that of a member of her extended family:

[I] was not really encouraged by my father as he was always wanting me to go and earn some money...my dad was hardly ever in work [and I was] not really given any confidence by my mother as she did not have any confidence herself...it was the influence of my educated... aunt...who influenced my mother for me to continue my education to 'A' level.

As a young mother at home with two children she lived through the strife of Miners' Strike (1985). She describes that time:

I remember the picketing at [the] colliery...brother fighting brother and the house next door to where we lived on the council estate had scab written on it one night and all those general issues about resentment but at the same time people not having any money and literally starving and sons fighting fathers.

Maureen saw her community decline once the pits closed and the redundancy money dried up. She observed:

The pubs that had been the hub of the community...were closed up and garages as people could not afford the petrol for cars and so...local villages...were virtually derelict.

She recalls the immediate effect of the closures and describes how the quality of family life degenerated:

There were no jobs to be had...then jobs started to change...the mines were closed but manufacturing offered jobs for females...all of those factories were thriving at the time and so a lot of part time work for women but no long term well paid sustained work. The men were spending the money that the women had earned in the pubs drinking and gambling and that gave the next generation that standard for their life [of] being unemployed and hanging around the clubs. [The clothing] manufacturing [industry] offered jobs for females [then they closed down]. Then the culture of drugs and crime became prevalent it was a natural progression as there was nothing else for people to do.

After the Miners' Strike (1985) she joined an Access to Higher Education course that was provided at an outreach community college. Here she mixed with local people who had experienced a poor education and were suffering from the effects of the closure of the coalmines, and who wanted to return to learn for a brighter future. Belonging to this community from birth, she explains that she knew how others felt after being cast off due to the closures:

[I] understood what some of the issues were for people...I knew the community all my life...people in the collieries did not have high aspirations...I think they were scared [to leave] as it was all they knew in terms of work and lifestyle and the people they knew were here and they inherently lacked confidence.

She became a community education tutor and through her different roles in community adult education Maureen has recognised that economic decline has had devastating social consequences.

She describes the culture that exists today:

Families where everyone is unemployed and there is no partner, [there is] no positivity, no confidence [and] where do they go? They stay here and remain unemployed [and] not a lot of people move out. These people are now into the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of poverty and illness accessing pay day loans and living on benefits. The people now haven't even got the experience of work and the [lack of] social skills generated from that [and] so they tend to be lonely and more isolated and this causes them to be not inclined to participate. I don't think [this is] diminishing.

Maureen has observed that a culture of long term unemployment and the physical decay of the community have affected the mental health and wellbeing of her community and that the past is very much resonate in the present:

People have been used to living in drab surroundings...[There is] a high level of depression and mental health problems that exist...a feeling of being lost...or what is happening to my life in general. I think it might be a combination of some inherited problems [closure of coalmines and unemployment] and some new problems arising from the culture we have today but it seems to be particularly affecting young men and there is a high rate of suicide...locally [amongst] young men. This is a very significant problem [but] young people today have never experienced work in the main...the educational system has failed a lot of these people.

Maureen was born into humble beginnings and has shown resilience and loyalty by living and working through tough times in community adult education in this former coalfield area. Encouraging generations of ex-mining families to participate in learning she stands out as a role model, especially to working class women who seek to find a meaningful existence living in this austere place. Maureen declares, 'my loyalty [is] to the community because they seemed the most deserving to me'.

### **Isobel**

Isobel was 27 years of age when the village colliery closed prior to the Miners' Strike (1985). She describes what happened at that time:

Men finishing at the colliery...the brick works which were attached to the colliery [they] gradually just faded...everybody worked on the weekly bill

and it hit my mother very hard [owner of corner shop] because most of the people finished at the pit could not pay...you had the women who did the part-time jobs...in a dress factory...and also [a] sweet factory...they [the families] could have relied on the women's wages but they did not have that either [as the factories were] all closed down. The shops were finished just generally a whole depression everything went...It was a total catastrophe as far as the mining community went.

She observed how the social fabric of the community changed when houses were left empty due to the exit of young miners and their families and outsiders relocated into the village:

You have the families who had been here donkeys' years since the collieries opened... you got [younger] people from other communities round about where they had not got housing and usually the poorer section went to our village and that is how our village really hit a bad patch. The younger people [who were relocated here at that time] never had any jobs...the younger generation [today] who are now in their twenties and thirties have [also] never worked, never lived in a house where anybody has worked...and have got no routine. That disconnection between the older group [who had worked] and the young group [who have never worked]...caused a lot of the troubles.

Isobel shows little sympathy for young families who are jobless in her locality. She describes widespread apathy amongst these families who are welfare dependent:

You see them [young people] walking around the village just pushing prams and doing nothing...they have no intentions of joining anything that is productive...They [young people] will go and spend their last on drink and then have nothing. The concept of saving for a rainy day or putting something away for a bill...it just doesn't connect [with them] at all. I think that far too many couples get too much family allowance per child. I think they have got to the stage of thinking of having children is a way of financing their lives. They think that if they have a nice big family they are going to get a nice big house and they don't have to work and pay for it. It would be silly to work for it when you can get it for nothing...it's a whole attitude now I think.

Isobel was born in this colliery village and educated at a local grammar school. She has remained a loyal resident for 77 years. However, unlike many other local residents Isobel has been fortunate enough to have experienced a lifetime of employment until she retired. She recalls that on retirement she was motivated to

return to learning to become a volunteer as she had, 'always been very politically aware...and aware of the effects of government policies on local people [and I wanted to] do something about it'.

Isobel recognises that community adult education, in providing her with a 'paralegal course based on the law as it affects community centres, [how to complete] funding application forms and [how to] run projects', equipped her with the knowledge and skills to become a volunteer. She describes her volunteer roles as beneficial to herself and others, 'you felt you were doing something useful and worthwhile. I have been a helper, a prop, a support'. In recent years she has undertaken challenging and high profile volunteer roles that have enabled her to contribute to bringing about social regeneration of her community. She recalls:

I have seen a lot of changes...the building of this [community] centre, the regeneration of the community [demolishing of council housing stock and the building of new social and private housing for new residents] as I am past chair of the [village regeneration] partnership. [Now] I am on the board [as] a director of the new community centre.

Isobel finds that she is facing many challenges as a volunteer director at the new community centre. Austerity measures have significantly reduced funding for the voluntary sector and this has prevented some projects from being sustained. In addition, participation at the centre is low as it is focused on young people who are difficult to engage.

Isobel's describes her vision for the centre, but this vision is not shared by other board members:

I want to see it [the centre] developing equally to help anybody who is walking past here who is lonely and old or younger and...they can come in and there can be some support for them. I don't feel that's the case now as it has become selective just for one group [young people].

Her participation in community education and high profile volunteer roles have not changed her attitude to the younger generation who have been less fortunate in life than herself. However, as volunteer director of the community centre she tries to



overcome her attitude, to demonstrate fairness and show loyalty to all age groups who need to access the centre.

## **Hilda**

Hilda is widowed and 84 years of age. She has spent her lifetime living in what is now a former mining community. She recalls the many industrial disputes at the colliery until it finally closed:

Things did change over the years... there was a lot of problems with management and the workers... and those sort of things affected families but on a whole this last final closure...I feel killed these villages...the connections [between communities] have gone.

The aftermath of this closure caused many families to leave the village as there was no work and men wanted work. She recalls, 'they had to go to the coastal pits when this pit closed. People were not happy about that [as] they [were] not always accepted at another colliery'.

The effects of the closure of the coalmine were not just that it lost many of its families who belonged to the mining community but there is a sense of sadness and loss in today's younger generation who have grown up in this village.

She describes the situation:

They stand around [street] corner ends...[when] they would have been working at the pit...or on the surface. There has always been some young people what can I say who were not happy at school...but there appears to be more now and that is sad.

Hilda recalls, '[I] did not pass the 11 plus...[but] my mother paid privately for shorthand and typing lessons when I was at school'. Having a supportive mother who was interested in her education and her future enabled her to obtain clerical work on leaving school. She remembers, 'my mother went with me to the interview but she stood outside in the rain with her umbrella...but I got the job'.

She never returned to work once she was married and had children. Both Hilda's mother and husband opposed her returning to work. She recalls, 'my mother had told me if you have any children I am not looking after them'. She remembers the dominant attitude of her husband, 'I would have worked but my husband did not really want me to work'. She remains living in this former mining village where she feels a strong sense of belonging and loyalty. Kinship is important to Hilda as she asserts that, 'I would not move [as] I have very good neighbours. We all moved here [to these houses] together and in fact we knew each other you know from years ago'.

Hilda returned to learning in later life and for the last 13 years she has attended the community centre in this ex-colliery village for local history and computer courses. She recalls that on taking up ICT classes after her husband's death, 'I got a certificate [for] word processing, email, internet...[I] enjoyed it very much'. She finds a great source of comfort in being able to remain in regular contact through email with relatives at home and abroad from the computer room of this rural community centre.

She enrolled for a local history class that focused on the social and economic history of this ex-colliery village. She recalls how the group, with tutorial support, went about becoming active rather than passive learners and conducted research by interviewing members of the community and also 'asking people for [old] photographs'. The group created a photographic exhibition that was displayed at local venues. The audience was often children and young people who had little appreciation of their mining heritage and of what life was like in a working mining community. She recalls, 'over 800 people came to see it at local libraries'.

Hilda, as a third age student, has found that having access to community based informal learning most beneficial. It has given her a purpose in helping to sustain the local history group that lost its funding due to austerity measures. She explains 'we decided among us [to continue to meet]' and they have become volunteer archivists for the archive of the socio-economic history of their village. In addition, it has been

a lifeline in giving her companionship through meeting others within and beyond the community. She reflects:

Been a great help to me...an interest to keep you going...it is something to look forward to...[gives you] something to talk about and you have something in common with other people...I can't say but [without it] I may have been isolated...the ICT side has given [me a] much wider connection with the outside world...[computers] are no longer mysterious [as] I used to think they were a waste of time...[community adult education has] certainly made me more confident.

## **Billy**

Billy was born into a pit village 58 years ago. He describes how lively the village was prior to the Miners' Strike (1985), '[There was] a vibrant front street...20 to 30 pubs [and] shops...it was a real busy place'. Referring to his father as an example Billy recalls how people supported each other with their skills in this community. 'My father [would go to] a night job to somebody's staircase, room or bedroom and he would not charge the old people...he was that sort of bloke he didn't want to take off the elderly people who couldn't afford it'.

Since leaving secondary modern school with 2 'O' levels, Billy had experienced a lifetime of manual work until the Miners' Strike (1985). Billy's interest in playing in a brass band was nurtured at school and it was to give him connections that would help him to secure work. He remembers:

The man at the club said, "I have an interview for you tomorrow if you are interested at the coke ovens and I am on the interview panel...just say you play for the brass band"...that was how it was then...I [was employed as] a junior apprenticeship trainee.

Spending most of his working life at the coke works he explains their closure and his move to a pit:

After the Miners' Strike all the walls [of the coke ovens] crumbled...and they closed the coke works...so we were all offered redundancy...[I] thought I could get another job...I transferred over [to a working pit] and there was a lot of animosity as we were outsiders and they were very clingy and I was there just under 4 years before the colliery closed.

Being declared redundant from the pit and receiving large redundancy payments had a euphoric effect on Billy and the other redundant miners. The elation of being released from the routine of work was not to last long before dysphoria set in. He describes that time:

I got £16,500...it was like [winning] the Euro Lottery. So lads like me were going down to the club...flashing the cash. I was backing horses and buying everyone drinks and tabs. We got through it pretty quick and then it started over again worrying about bills...it led to a load of increased pressure at home. Everybody didn't realise the long-term effects especially for the lads who had been there 30 years on the coalface and the industries that served the pits [that] closed.

He remembers how this once 'vibrant' colliery village declined, 'high street shops...clubs, pubs were closing and the local infrastructure started dying off and the people no longer had the money in their pocket to support it'. He observed, as the economy changed, that finding new employment was extremely difficult for men with literacy and numeracy difficulties:

[There] was a big shift...what came into being was the industrial estates...imagine... you had a...miner from the coalface and they would say "I'm nay good at Maths and English"...it just wasn't going to happen for them...they were not confident enough and all the wives did...the bills answered the phone and opened the door...so you were asking men from these industries who were good at what they did and they thought their job was...secure [to retrain for new industries].

Billy describes the effects of the loss of traditional manual work and changes in gender roles on family life:

Women had to go out to work and the men were at home...looking after the kids so it was a whole role reversal going on. Women could get...low paid work in clothes factories...but they shut as well. There was a lot of divorces...a lot of depression...a lot of people just drinking too much...a lot of blokes seemed to lose all hope and you would see them shuffling about the streets.

Billy's lifeline in these troubled times was his relationship with the brass band. This continued to open doors to other opportunities for him in this parochial community. He remembers:

I was talking to the conductor...[he] was the Music Tutor at the college and I said “is there any jobs going at the college” ...sure enough [he informed me] “they are looking for support workers...[for] learners with special educational needs”...I started on the Monday.

This job opportunity was to take Billy on an unexpected learning journey:

The music tutor...saw something in me that made him say “have you ever thought about doing this for a living teaching and working with special needs and music [as] you can do the 7307 Teaching Certificate for Adults?”.

Billy was rejected at a young age by an educational system that determined which school children should go to at the age of 11. He remembers, ‘the 11+ plus failed us...secondary modern it was rough’.

Rejection at such a young age had left him lacking in confidence and feeling intellectually inferior to others. This was most evident when he returned to learning to take up his place on the 7307 course. He remembers how inferior he felt:

I sat and listened to other people...they were always much better than me sort of brighter posher [than] the colliery lad the poor relation...can still feel intimidated. I loved this education I felt myself becoming more confident...I didn’t stop at the 7307 Cert Ed...straight on for the Diploma and...me Degree.

Once educated, Billy has remained constantly loyal to this deprived community by undertaking different community roles to engage disadvantaged people into learning.

Billy claims his struggle in transforming his life from redundant miner to a community worker is down to the characteristics of his North East upbringing, ‘we had that work ethic...we had values and we were resilient...the ability to survive under difficult circumstances’...[but the government] see us as ‘the peasants on the wastelands’.

## Barry

Barry is in his thirties and remembers little of the closure of the traditional industries but recognises that he has lived with the long-term effects of their loss in this deprived community. Barry is unemployed and observes, 'It had an effect on me...where I can and can't look for work...[a] lot [now] for women in work but not men...as not the jobs for men'.

Life changed when Barry's partner gave birth to special needs twins. Barry explains he is a 'full time carer for my two disabled children'. He reflects on how his physical and mental health deteriorated due to long-term unemployment and non-participation in community life:

I became more affected by headaches and lipoma...if you think of yourself and look at yourself and surroundings you can go quite mad...if you sit around...your brain starts slowing down...it is to do with self-esteem.

Demoralised by his situation, Barry, rather than becoming further dismayed, engaged for the first time with community based informal learning through a Sure Start programme. He recalls:

Originally it was to pass the time...[improve] my health...keep myself occupied [as it] it keeps your mind off looking at yourself...doing something you are interested in. to help me and...others.

Although he remembers his formal education as 'positive...[as it] made me understand that you can't take the easy way out', returning to learning as an adult was a big step. He explains, 'when I first returned to training I was not that confident in how I would be treated but over time you become more and more confident'.

Participation in learning at Sure Start brought a new direction in Barry's life. He recalls he was nominated, 'Chair [of the] Dad's Group and it gave me a purpose'. He describes the present economic climate for himself and those who attend the group who are all dependent on welfare benefits:

Not a lot out there geared for men and now a days there are a lot of single dads compared to what you used to have and the present climate and loss of jobs effects them...[the] dads group is - a springboard to help [men] as we have a lot of disabled people as they can't work and they brought out the new [welfare] benefit [universal credit] not incapacity [benefit for disabled people] and sometimes they [Job Centre Plus] fail them which is surprising and put them on [government] training courses.

As chair of the Dad's Group he is responsible for applying to different funding sources to ensure the delivery of adult education courses to disadvantaged men. He describes the challenges and also the frustrations he faces:

We became constituted...so it became my responsibility to get [community education and] training for the guys. They have tightened the net on funding on what you can and can't do... the hoops you have to jump through...the courses what we are able to [offer is] affected by the place we are in...a lot of the courses we get are...free [such as] cooking on a budget, mosaics...a lot to keep you occupied but not to take you forward...some guys went to do English classes and some to cake decorating and all started from these basic courses and once you start one it leads to different avenues but nothing major...why do people want to learn how to put mosaics on a mirror or use a microwave but that's the type of course...they are giving us to do...people [are] not interested [and they are] not beneficial...[but] we attend although it is not what we want to do...[as] it gives us something to do...but [these] courses...don't lead anywhere...it's hard for men especially in this locality.

Barry's role as chair of the Dad's Group has raised his profile in this community and he was invited by a voluntary organisation to sit on their management committee and work as a volunteer. He describes his volunteer role:

I do [tutor] training here...to become a Digital Champion...by facilitating the courses and getting them organised, you understand more...and become more confident...I know about computers [and] they want me...to help others with computers [and] with job searchers [and] online benefit claims.

As a father of special needs twins Barry liaised closely with his local nursery and primary school to ensure the educational needs of his children were being met. As his confidence increased, he successfully applied to become a school governor where his children attend school. He explains:

I was governor at primary and now nursery school...[I did] governor training through [the] Civic Centre...and I did Safeguarding Child Protection [and] e-learning about budgets.

Barry recognises that community adult education has opened up a different way of life for him from being isolated at home as he now has importance and a social position as a loyal volunteer in helping others. Such status has improved his wellbeing. He reflects:

If you are in a situation and there is nothing...it effects your self- esteem and your families but if you...have a purpose it helps...learning keeps you active and if you learn then you can help others...being on [the] management committee...and governor in school...in a Dad's Group...helps you to look at a broader spectrum and look at what's out there...opened my eyes up to a lot of politics...[helps you understand] who you are.

## **Analysis**

### **Introduction**

The following themes develop the argument of how ontological insecurity is a hidden outcome of de-industrialisation: the destruction of kinship networks; the restructuring of gender roles; and devalued lives. Before we can go into this argument I define ontological security and kinship and why they were important for everyday life in coal and steel working communities.

### **From ontological security to ontological insecurity**

These communities that were created around, and became dependent on, coal and steel production (Fowler et al, 2001) have never been secure as they have always been subjected to the demands of global capitalism. Production provided a routine to everyday life through a gendered organisation of work, as “the woman was to create a refuge, a place where the male worker could be physically and emotionally re-



energised to return to work next day” (Bulmer cited in Warwick and Littlejohn, 1992, pp.34-35). Gendered organisation of work and kinship practices, in addition to other routine affective practices found in the social and cultural life of these communities, all provided a sense of security to local people. According to Walkerdine (2009, p.63), such practices provide “ontological security” which she describes as:

The rhythm and patterns of everyday life, both materially and emotionally, which held a community in place and provided the community with a sense of safety...and emotional containment.

“Ontological security”, based on maintaining routine was, “a stable mental state derived from a sense of continuity in regards to the events of one’s life” (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012, p.48). Kearney (1990, p.69) describes how life revolved around the routine of everyday work:

The works was central to social, cultural and political life. Coal and steel was the only reason for our existence. Every aspect of life was tied to the works...[local people] had organised their entire lives and relationships around work.

De-industrialisation of the traditional industries ruptured the “containing skin” (Walkerdine, 2010, p.91) that had held these communities together like glue. This skin had affectively contained anxieties and feelings of insecurity through the routine of work, kinship practices, and affective work and social relationships. Kinship had developed over time in a population who had a common identity through insecure and dangerous work and who lived in close proximity to each other in back to back terrace houses. The skin, once ruptured, shifted the mental state of the population from one of “ontological security” to “ontological insecurity”. This shift was to change a way of life for both men and women and their future generations when work disappeared for the men. These communities had always lived through times of insecure work but not a time when there was no work. In the following section I explain what kinship is and the effect of its loss on de- industrialised communities.

## **Themes**

### **Introduction**

Within each theme where verbatim text is taken from a life story this is to give examples of how learners experienced ontological insecurity through the loss of kinship networks, how their gender roles within family life became polarized and how they came to be devalued not only through de-industrialisation but also through the education system.

### **Destruction of Kinship Networks**

County Durham coal and steel communities were described by Bulmer (cited in Warwick and Littlejohn, 1992, pp.34-35) as:

Close knit communities that showed solidarity in good and bad times given their shared socio-economic history. Each household offered a support kinship network to the extended family and neighbours.

Fraser (2014, p.59) argues that kinship was a necessity in industrial communities as:

Capitalism often exploited semi-proletarianized households that combined male employment with female homemaking...under these arrangements, which allow owners to pay workers less, many households derive a significant portion of their sustenance from sources other than cash wages, including self-provisioning (food and clothing) and informal reciprocity (mutual aid and in-kind transaction).

Walkerline and Jimenez (2012, p.48), in their study of a Welsh steel town, argue that kinship is more than providing food and clothing through in-kind transactions as it provides “psychosocial mutual support that is affective and social”. Kinship or communal self-help that was based on mutual support and aid helped to form a safety net around industrial communities in County Durham. Kinship was also a form of social production as the caregivers, who were pre-dominantly women, cared for the children, the elderly and sick within the extended family and neighbourhood. Such collective ways of organising themselves enabled these communities not only to survive hardship, but kinship also provided a lifeline of emotional support and reduced anxiety within the population.

The following narratives explain what kinship did for people living in industrial communities. Isobel remembers her mother, who had a corner shop, preventing families from going hungry as she provided food without payment until pay day arrived. She points out, ‘everybody worked on the weekly bill’. Billy, a brass band player, recalls how he was kept in employment through who he knew, ‘I got a job straight away...at the Coke Works on the ovens...because of the brass band...I didn’t need an interview...that’s how it was then’. Billy has memories of his father who would come in from work as a painter and then go out in the evening to help his neighbours. Billy explains, ‘a night job to somebody’s staircase, room or bedroom and he would not charge the old people...he was that sort of bloke he didn’t want to take off the elderly people who couldn’t afford it’. Cathy remembers how her clothes as a child were provided by others, ‘I never had anything new...it was always passed down...that was [the case] for the whole place’. Maureen was one of 10 children who recognised that she has to thank a female member of her extended family who supported her education when it had been opposed by a dominant father. She remembers, ‘it was the influence of my educated aunt who had been successful and who influenced my mother for me to continue my education’. Hilda recalls how she was kept in work through her mother’s kinship network and speaking out on her behalf, ‘my mother went with me to the interview...but I got the job’.

According to Coleman (cited in Fellerman and Debevec, 1993, p.459) the working class relies heavily on kinship networks for “job opportunities ...and help during crisis”.

Billy reminds us that some miners, due to poor education and lack of attendance at school, could barely read or write. Kinship networks played a vital part, especially by women who helped their spouse or family member with everyday literacy and numeracy difficulties. He also recognised that nepotism through extended family networks in favouring relations for jobs was now obsolete as new industries demanded testing of an individual’s skills and knowledge rather than family connections:

A miner from the coalface and they would say “I’m nay good at Maths and English” ...it just wasn’t going to happen for them [a job in the neoliberal workplace]...they were not confident enough and all the wives did...the bills...answered the phone and opened the door.

According to Rosenthal (cited in Fellerman and Debevec, 1993, p.460) “the overwhelming majority of kin-keeping activities is carried out by middle-aged women, who do most of the visiting, telephoning and letter writing”.

The stories disclose that kinship was an effective survival strategy for families in the face of economic difficulties for mutual aid, emotional support and jobs. This form of solidarity practised within families and across different households by women was overturned by the economic shock of de-industrialisation. These stories explain how kinship relationships that were shaped through surviving economic difficulties over many generations became emotionally charged at the time of the Miners’ Strike 1985, contributing to a break-up of kinship practices. A key effect of the loss of kinship is social isolation and a culture of individualism.

Billy describes how men became hostile to each other in a vulnerable workplace after redundancies on a massive scale took place in the pits and jobs were at a premium:

After the Miners’ Strike (1985)...it was irreparable. All the walls [of the coke ovens] crumbled...and they closed the coke works...so we were all offered redundancy...I transferred over [to a pit that was still operating] and there was a lot of animosity as we were outsiders and they were very clingy and I was there just under 4 years before the colliery closed.

Maureen describes the way in which family feuds emerged during the Miners’ Strike (1985) when those who wanted to return to work were not just prevented from doing so at the picket line but within their own family. The aftermath of these feuds still resonates today:

I remember the picketing at [the] colliery...brother fighting brother and the house next door to where we lived on the council estate had scab written on it one night and all those general issues about resentment but at the same time people not having any money and literally starving and sons fighting fathers.

Theresa remembers that not only did the colliery close and work disappeared but with it went the social network ties between families and neighbours. She recalls:

When the mine went the community went and a loss of social structure of the community...and they were demoralised...there is not the sense of community that there used to be...social isolation...people now keep themselves to themselves...but the whole culture has changed now.

Isobel explains that today her former colliery village has experienced social regeneration with new residents moving in, but they remain as socially isolated as those who have been in the community for generations. Neither new nor older residents participate in the life of the community, 'they are just not interested...it's just a base...they have never become involved'.

Maureen describes today how a continual lack of work and routine brought about by de-industrialisation has contributed to the breakup of kinship networks. She explains how family life has become fragmented and there is breakdown in social bonds between individuals and their community causing them to become isolated. She sees de-industrialisation as having defined the lives of future generations and sees its effects as remaining long after closures took place as working class communities continue to decline:

Families where everyone is unemployed and there is no partner, [there is] no positivity, no confidence...these people are now into the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of poverty and illness accessing pay day loans and living on benefits. The people now haven't even got the experience of work and the [lack of] social skills generated from that [and] so they tend to be lonely and more isolated and this causes them to be not inclined to participate. I don't think [this is] diminishing.

The re-configuring of these communities through de-industrialisation has resulted in the destruction of kinship practices with the effect of social isolation and individualisation on community life. Kinship that was solely based on an economic relationship by people who had a common identity through work was destroyed

when families, workplaces and their communities became emotionally charged due to this economic crisis. A loss of work, routine and income was to follow and men were cast off onto the dole queue. Income that was once supplemented through kinship practices of mutual aid was to be replaced by meagre state welfare benefits. Aid for food and clothing was to be provided at the loss of one's privacy through local and central government agencies who, according to Cockburn (1977, p.181), surveilled the working class.

The stories also describe communities where everyone once knew and looked after each other through kinship practices becoming places of social isolation as people began to live solitary lives and did not engage with their community. With the destruction of kinship practices a culture of individualisation has permeated these communities, making individuals more remote from each other and discouraging cooperation between them. It was the rise of the Voluntary and Community Sector that was to provide a new model of kinship. According to Boykoff (2011, p.103), individualisation has "atomised" everyday life as it has "broken down natural bonds of duty and responsibility...thus disrupting ties with our neighbours".

According to Lefebvre (cited in Boykoff 2011, p.106), atomisation was an attack on the working class industrial way of life:

Atomisation is a class weapon as the neoliberal promise of freedom from the constraints of the routine of the traditional industries has denied people an identity...from work.

Not only has this new found freedom denied people an identity through work and a loss of kinship practices but it has created a sense of ontological insecurity that increased anxiety in the population. According to Kline (2008, pp.12-21), "when populations are in shock from an economic crisis...they are unable to stand firm against change...as it generates fear and anxiety in the population".

The following section describes how men and women's traditional roles were restructured through de-industrialisation.

## **Restructuring of gender roles**

This economic shock had different implications for men and women who were now surplus to requirements and were left, according to Bauman (2008, p.1) “to devise individual solutions to socio-economic generated problems”. The role of women was to take a different form from that of domesticity as de-industrialisation paradoxically resulted in an increase in insecure, low paid, unskilled, non-unionised work for women in local factories. Capitalism failed to reproduce itself in these former industrial areas except for small factories on industrial estates found on the periphery of communities. Billy explains that redundant men did not take up these job opportunities as they did not possess the confidence for factory work, which was a different workplace culture to that of traditional industries:

[There] was a big shift...what came into being was the industrial estates...imagine... you had a... miner from the coalface...it just wasn't going to happen for them...they were not confident enough.

Maureen describes low levels of confidence and fear in redundant miners:

People [men] in the collieries did not have high aspirations...I think they were scared as it was all they knew in terms of work and lifestyle [coalmining] and the people they knew were here and they inherently lacked confidence.

As men did not have the confidence to enter factory work it became inevitable that the role of women was to substantially change. Women, out of economic necessity, took up low paid factory jobs and feminised these workplaces. The stories reveal these jobs were short lived due to further de-industrialisation. This was, however, the beginning of women moving from respectable domesticity into a precarious, low paid labour market. This enabled them to have some financial independence and gain a voice while men remained at home. According to McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.166), “A new polarization between men and women was set up”.

The increase in the employment of women in low paid, unskilled work...this trend is known as feminisation of the workplace. This growth in female employment grew dramatically in the region of North East England...industrial restructuring is not gender- neutral [as]

replacement...[of] heavy industries by light manufacturing and service work...was a search for cheap, more docile labour. This changing division of labour as a whole implies both a changing spatial and sexual division.

(McKenzie and Damaris 1982, pp.181-182)

The learners describe the embryonic stages of role reversal taking place across their villages.

Isobel observed that women in the colliery villages became the main breadwinners by going out to work in local factories out of financial necessity:

Men finishing at the colliery, you had the women who did the part-time jobs...in a dress factory...and also [the] sweet factory and they were all women's unskilled jobs. ...They [the families] could have relied on the women's wages but they did not have that either [as the factories were] all closed down.

Billy remembers when role reversal took place in his village that there was a 'mental shift in the villages...[as] women had to go out to work...[in] low paid work in...clothes factories...they even closed [down]'.

Maureen describes the beginning of unskilled, low paid work for women living in the former coalfield:

There were no jobs to be had...then jobs started to change...the mines were closed but manufacturing offered jobs for females...all of those factories were thriving at the time and so a lot of part-time work for women but no long term well paid sustained work.

According to McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.181), women provided a "cheap and flexible labour force that worked for pin money". Men who had depended upon the domestic role of women in the home now found their role restructured as they were no longer the breadwinner but at home becoming increasingly long term unemployed or in the club. Women who had stepped over the threshold of the domestic sphere



into the world of work faced the challenge of managing the dual roles of work and home. Changes in behaviour became visible in family life.

Billy recalls this time in his life and what happened in family life:

It led to a load of increased pressure at home but a lot of the lads like me were doing the same and we were down at the club everyday flashing the cash about as we had never had it backing 20, 30 quid on horses just stupid and what happened was a big shift as the men couldn't get jobs as there was no replacement industries, the local infrastructure started dying off... Women had to go out to work and the men were at home... looking after the kids so it was a whole role reversal going on... there was a lot of divorces... a lot of depression... a lot of people just drinking too much... a lot of blokes seemed to lose all hope and you would see them shuffling about the streets... but everybody didn't realise the long term effects.

Maureen recalls how men responded due to the loss of work and the effect on family life:

The men were spending the money that the women had earned in the pubs drinking and gambling and that gave the next generation that standard for their life [of] being unemployed and hanging around. Then the culture of drugs and crime became prevalent it was a natural progression as there was nothing else for people to do.

Lily explains that men took comfort in alcohol with other ex-miners at the club once they lost their working class identity. This was a place where they could share their private troubles:

[For] men it is difficult to find where you fit if you haven't got your job which is your main sort of identity for most of your life. There was no work on that basis... you can spend a lot of time in the club... you have a few pints of beer with your marras [friends] in the afternoon I don't think people realise they are getting into the habit before it's too late.

As women's jobs outside of the home became increasingly important due to a decline in family income, the women did not have the additional resources of professional childcare and care of the elderly, flexible working hours and a good transport infrastructure to support them at this time of de-industrialisation. This put more

emotional strain on to family life as did the drinking habits and patriarchal oppression of the men, who were experiencing a deterioration in their mental health. Cathy recalls family life at this time in her ex-colliery village and how such destructive behaviour has continued to affect her life and that of future generations:

There was a lot of drunks and there was a lot of beating of wives and there was a lot of fear...me dad...he was a very violent alcoholic...[and] a gambler, me dad beating me mother up regularly...me mam and dad split up which was quite uncommon then ...my mam killed herself when I was 19...my first boyfriend was very like my father, violent, and gambled and that is what I expected...[he put me in] hospital several times...I was married [to another man] for 20 years. I had alcoholism [for] about 10 years. My husband did not hit me but he was very emotionally abusive and constantly put me down.

Greater deterioration in the mental health of men occurred the longer they were unemployed, and had no routine or financial security (Jahod et al, 1933). In the case of these de-industrialised communities this was to create a culture of anomie. According to Durkheim (1893), “anomie occurs when a community has undergone significant changes in its economic fortunes”. When a common identity that had made men feel connected with each other through work ceased to exist, and the skin of every day routine practices broke, freedom from work was exhilarating at first, but in time men realised that they had no sense of purpose in their lives. A loss of work and their working class identity were exacerbated by poverty and the restructuring of the traditional roles of men and women. This reinforced a sense of failure and shame in these men who were excluded from feminised workplaces as women became employed in low paid work in order to prevent family poverty and became the main breadwinners. Pimlott (1981, p.51) explained that unemployed men saw redundancy as a sign of personal failure although its true cause was a crisis within capitalism that was beyond their control. These stories describe that what followed was a breakdown in family life through patriarchal oppression accompanied by alcoholism and drugs. Divorce became prevalent and it was women who began to bear the brunt of these problems as their mental health declined and family life broke down. According to Seabrook (1982, pp.1-12), “limitless leisure” was not healthy for family life as “violence, marital breakdown and mental health difficulties often followed”.

The key effects of de-industrialisation have been ontological insecurity and the re-defining of family life. Once men and women became polarised, when their interdependent traditional gender roles of production and reproduction were restructured, this contributed to feelings of ontological insecurity in men. As masculine work disappeared and any continuity of the traditional roles in their lives had been broken, this brought about feelings of failure and shame and a deterioration in their mental health. This culminated in men being unable to emotionally contain their anxiety, which became visible through a change in their behaviour towards women through patriarchal oppression accompanied by alcohol and drugs.

Women too experienced ontological insecurity as they bear the brunt of these economic changes through gender violence that leads to poor mental health, and often culminates in divorce. For many women this has resulted in a life of shame, as they are dependent on welfare benefits or low paid work neither of which offer routes out of poverty. De-industrialisation, in breaking the skin of ontological security, brought about ontological insecurity that not only re-defined traditional roles but also re-defined family life in the Durham coalfields. According to Cockburn (1977, p.179), writing prior to the Miners' Strike (1985), "capital has actually defined the very shape of the family".

The following section explains how learners became devalued and shamed through de-industrialisation and subjectification and how they regained their respectability.

### **Devalued Lives**

Ontological insecurity has become a form of social control in the lives of these participants as fear of the past still resonates in the present. They have memories of experiencing the harshness of the past in these former mining communities and a lack of confidence in redundant workers at that time to leave the area. Maureen

remembers, 'I think they were scared [to leave] as it was all they knew in terms of work and lifestyle and the people they knew were here and they inherently lacked confidence'. The participants themselves remain living in these declining places where they have a sense of belonging and where de-industrialisation has defined their lives. Hilda was born 84 years ago into a colliery village and has remained living there throughout this time of de-industrialisation. She asserts, 'I would not move'. An inherent lack of confidence and feelings of no self-worth were key characteristics of these participants until they engaged in community adult education. Up until that point most had felt that de-industrialisation had not only disorientated their lives but also devalued them as people, leaving them feeling belittled, insecure and of little worth. Lily explains how her life has been devalued:

Financially...it has affected me because of the lack of work. My husband has been in and out of work for most of me married life. I got married the year after Maggie Thatcher came in...it was just starting then [lack of work and unemployment] and it has not got any better. I have had to manage on low income or on benefit for most of my married life so it has been difficult.

Lily describes how devalued her community has become, 'there is a whole generation [locally] who I know have never worked and have been on benefit all their lives. There is a whole generation that has no hope'.

According to Skeggs (2013, p.2), such working class populations are "symbolically positioned" due to capitalist exploitation that brought about de-industrialisation as this has "fixed" them and prevented them from moving through "physical social space".

The stories explain that the lives of the research participants have been constrained by little "economic, social and cultural capitals" (Bourdieu cited in Skeggs, 2013, p.16). Economic capital can be described as what they owned but most participants owned little as they were dependent on some form of welfare support, except for Theresa who was in low waged work and Maureen and Billy who earned an above average income for this area. All except Maureen did not own their own homes but lived in social or council housing. Social capital, or who they knew through networks

of relationships, only played a part in Billy's life, through his relationship with the brass band. Their cultural capital, which is an embodied state of long lasting dispositions of mind and body, was mostly negative. Theresa, Cathy and Barry had negative cultural capital as they experienced poor mental health. Educationally, Cathy, Maureen, Isobel and Billy left school with some qualifications with Theresa, Lily, Hilda and Barry having negative cultural capital as they left school with no qualifications, having had a poor education.

The stories of Barry, Billy, Theresa and Cathy are redemptive stories and they explain how they have overcome difficulties in their own lives and how community education has enabled them to be of value to others in their community. Barry, who was once demoralised by long term unemployment and experienced poor mental health, joined a Sure Start programme and has now become a valued and respected member of his community in helping other men to re-gain their respectability:

Chair [of the] Dad's Group and it gave me a purpose...[the] dads group is a springboard to help [men] as we have a lot of disabled people as they can't work and they brought out the new [welfare] benefit [universal credit] not incapacity [benefit for disabled people] and sometimes they [Job Centre Plus] fail them which is surprising and put them on [government] training courses...so it became my responsibility to get [community education and] training for the guys.

Barry claims community education 'helps you understand who you are'.

Since losing his masculine, industrial role Billy has carved out a respectable future for himself in community education. He started work as a 'support worker...[for] learners with special educational needs' and has undertaken different community roles to engage disadvantaged people in learning. Billy, although positioned in a decaying community, has not remained in the past and allowed himself to be shamed by the loss of masculine work and unemployment. He has not remained in limbo but transformed his life through education and by helping others to engage in learning. Billy claims this transformation is down to the culture of North East England, 'we

have that work ethic...we have values and we are resilient...and the ability to survive under difficult circumstances’.

Theresa explains that she has suffered from poor mental health in the past but her life was turned around through education at the women’s centre, and now she supports other women:

It was such a community (the centre) that had given me so much and so I wanted to support it. I did the ‘drop in’ service through offering one to one mentoring support, listening service as it had enhanced my life. Now I have a job which is satisfying to me as I support other women who have difficulties. I am a tutor and I teach Counselling and Personal Development and I have undertaken volunteer work in the Mental Health Sector.

Theresa claims community adult education has given her a new self-belief, ‘I now know who I am [and] I don’t feel inferior at all to anybody’.

Lily is dyslexic and attended the women’s education centre to help her overcome the fearful memories of her school days and challenge her dyslexia difficulties that have been a barrier to her moving forward in life. Lily now has counselling qualifications that have enabled her to become a volunteer counsellor to the Emotional Wellbeing Group at the women’s centre. She explains, ‘a lot of people come to me who have substance misuse issues like alcohol or drugs...I just try to give back a bit that’s all...so it is enriching my life’. Lily reflects, ‘I know myself very well now...it has changed my life 100%...I am more confident’.

The research participants resisted being devalued by political elites as they have created their own system of value through participation in, and loyalty to, community adult education. In doing so, this has improved Barry, Theresa and Cathy’s mental health and reduced their levels of anxiety. As Barry states, this is because he has ‘a purpose in life’ that had been taken away through de-industrialisation. Once educated, they put to good use their working class values of care and compassion in a collective way to support others. Although they live in left behind communities they

have not allowed themselves to be left behind, and are not allowing others to be left behind by engaging them in community learning. This has enabled these research participants to increase in confidence and to feel valued and useful once more through the power of community relationships and not through value premised on economic exchange.

De-industrialisation was not just a one-off historical event but is an ongoing process in the lives of the participants. Through community adult education they feel valued and use the values of their working class culture to benefit others. However, in everyday life they still face further devaluation. They are subjected to unpleasant opinions and judgements by those in authority and wider society. Such opinions are circulated via the media and social media about those living in North East England's deprived working class communities. Through this machinery of government and the media they are publicly shamed as immoral people who claim benefits. They have become known as welfare scroungers, the socially abject or the underclass. They are judged as subjects who do not contribute to the economy but live off taxpayers' money despite making valuable contributions to rebuilding the social fabric of their communities. These opinions are internalised by the learners. Maureen points out that the people of North East England were proud working class people who had generated wealth for industrial capitalists for generations. Since they were cast off through de-industrialisation they have been subjected to distasteful opinions that have circulated and made them into different subjects. She points out, 'we are the flat capped ignorant North Easterner who talks with a Geordie accent and you are nobody'. The government, according to Billy, see the North East and its people as 'the peasants on the wastelands'.

In contemporary Britain there are forms of governmentality in operation that are influencing and directing how we behave and act towards others in our society. Often this is to fit in with policy requirements such as trying to reduce the welfare bill and to stereotype welfare claimants as scroungers so that they will stop claiming.

Bhabha (cited in Tyler, 2013, p.214)

This process of subjectification by circulating odious opinions in order to shame de-industrialised communities is a government neoliberal weapon that increases the anxiety and ontological insecurity of these learners. It is a force that is felt not just through political elites, social media and government agencies, but also in schools.

The process of subjectification in the lives of Lily, Theresa and Billy began in primary school where they were left with long term scarring and a lack of confidence and self-belief and feelings of failure from a young age. They have carried these feelings in their psyche throughout their adult lives.

Lily, who is dyslexic, left school at 15 years of age without any qualifications. She has experienced low levels of confidence due to the way in which she was treated at school. She recalls, 'I was always treated as if I was thick and always thought of myself as thick'. Her school books had been sent away for inspection and returned without giving her an explanation. Lily's understanding is that she was never assessed at school for her dyslexia. On one occasion 'I was sent to the Head Teacher [as they] thought I was being...obstructive and uncooperative. [They thought] I should know how to spell but it just would not stay in there'. These memories have left Lily with a lot of fear about her spelling difficulties, and since leaving school many years ago she has been secretive about her dyslexia until arriving at the women's education centre.

Theresa, who had a poor education and no qualifications on leaving school, suffered from a lack of confidence and poor mental health, 'I wasn't very confident at all...my education was very negative'. At age 11 she was segregated from her primary school classmates by the 11 plus that defined children's ability at a very young age. Theresa explains, 'that was something that scarred me for life in a way but me family did not have aspirations for me it was always me brothers...I knew I could do better'. Lily, like Theresa, held feelings of not being good enough since not passing the 11 plus and being cast off as having no value from a young age. This lack



of confidence remained with her until her late 40s when she began to attend the women's education centre.

Billy left secondary modern school with 2 'O' levels but felt rejected, at the end of his primary school years, by an educational system that determined which school he should go to at the age of 11. He remembers, 'the 11+ plus failed us...secondary modern it was rough'. This experience left him lacking in confidence and feeling intellectually inferior to others. He remembers how inferior he felt on returning to education as an adult, 'I sat and listened to other people...they were always much better than me sort of brighter posher [than] the colliery lad the poor relation...I can still feel intimidated'.

A culture of no confidence is part of the historical cultural capital that has been endemic in these communities. This has been reinforced in the lives of these learners, who have experienced poor education and have been subjected to harsh and negative feedback as reflected in these stories:

A lack of confidence and feelings of inferiority were the consequence of over a 100 years of state schooling that did not value the working class and so today the inferior other resonates in the present.

(Reay, 2009, p.24)

Cathy experiences subjectification as a welfare claimant when she attends Job Centre Plus mandatory assessment interviews that are part of the neo-liberal state welfare reform policies. As a welfare claimant, Cathy's anxiety levels increase as she approaches Job Centre interviews where she must give an account of her time and prove she is keeping to the strict conditional requirements of claiming welfare. She is not sure if she will be treated with respect at these interviews or if she will be subjected to threats of sanction and losing her benefits. Losing her benefits would impact on her mental health, which in turn would inevitably lead to problems within her home life and might exclude her from her social networks. In Cathy's case it

could possibly lead to suicide as she suffers from depression and is a recovering alcoholic; sanctioning or the anticipation of sanctioning could be deeply harmful. As an unemployed single mother she explains:

You keep getting letters... 'we are going to take it off you' and you are terrified when you walk into your own home in case the letter is on the doormat...it is in your mind all of the time...[at interview] I wish they would say this woman is doing her best here she is doing voluntary, she is doing education, but they don't.

According to (Mole, 2013, p.112).

Neoliberalism is "lived on the skin" as it causes health and psychological problems of the following nature. Emotional disturbance (anxiety and depression), psychosomatic symptoms of respiratory and skin related problems and behavioural problems (increased alcohol and cigarette intake) in addition to a reduced desire to engage socially.

Through the processes of de-industrialisation and subjectification the ruling elite have imposed their authority and created differences within the working class between those who are respectable and those who are non-respectable. Class is therefore no longer the differences between the working class and middle class where one is judged on one's practices and values through the "classing gaze" (Finch cited in Skeggs, 1998, p.4). The respectable working class are the ones who comply with a neo-liberal labour market and have exchange value. Shame is imposed on those who do not achieve employment. They are seen as the non-respectable working class. The learners in this study have refuted this ideology and have found a different way to becoming respectable other than through the neo-liberal market. They may not have exchange value but they do have use-value in rebuilding the social fabric of their communities.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis reveals that the key effects of de-industrialisation are ontological insecurity, the re-defining of family life and the devaluing of working class lives.

An analysis of the effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of these learners confirms the real loss in people's lives is the sense of ontological security that had been founded on the routine practices of everyday working life in industrial communities. Working in these industries provided not just routine and financial security but also collective solidarity through trade unions and community life that procured a safety net for these workers and their families. The social, cultural and political life of these communities was structured through the workplace through a gendered organisation of work and kinship practices. Such affective practices held these communities together and provided them with a sense of security and emotional stability. De-industrialisation, on breaking the 'skin' or fabric of everyday routines, altered the mental state of the population from one of "ontological security" to "ontological insecurity" and increased anxiety. This shift was to reconfigure a way of life for both men and women and their future generations. De-industrialisation has redefined and fragmented family life and weakened the subjectivities of men and women through gender violence, poor mental health, increased alcohol consumption and drugs.

De-industrialisation had different implications for men and women. Through a loss of masculine work men lost their common identity that had provided them with a sense of solidarity with each other. For men, role reversal within the home when women became breadwinners for their families, increased their sense of failure and shame. Thus, the restructuring of gender roles brought about a polarisation between men and women that contributed to feelings of ontological insecurity in men. The

statistics on gender violence are indicative of the morbid way these changes in ontological security have become visible. The result, particularly for men, is “anomie”, disconnected lives and loss of personal confidence and poor mental health often accompanied by increased alcohol and drug consumption.

For women, the impact was more contradictory as women were the backbone of these communities through their traditional gender role and through kinship networks that were essential in providing mutual aid and emotional support. De-industrialisation disintegrated kinship networks and reconfigured the traditional role of women by re-positioning women out of the home and into a low paid workplace. Out of financial necessity work became essential as men stayed at home and became long term unemployed. The strain on partnerships created tensions and conflict in family life and women bore the brunt of these difficulties. These stories reveal that women experienced oppressive patriarchal relationships that resulted in a breakdown of family life, a decline in their mental health, increased alcohol consumption, divorce and dependency on welfare benefits that provided no way out of poverty. Women bear the brunt of this ‘hidden’ impact of deindustrialisation which is shame and they feel they are judged by others. ‘Respectability’ has always been framed in class terms and the ‘classing gaze’ is as relevant today as it was in Victorian times where people were judged on their behaviour, appearance and value.

Class has been produced in these communities by a powerful political elite, who have devalued working class lives through de-industrialisation and neoliberal policies of welfare reform, and employment policies that support capitalists rather than workers. Fixed in these de-industrialised areas the stories explain that de-industrialisation had not only disorientated respondents’ lives and devalued them as people, but also demoralised them through a poor working class education. Through a process of subjectification the political elite and media circulates derogatory opinions in order to shame de-industrialised communities. The life stories reveal that learners internalise these comments and that increases their anxiety. The force of subjectification has been felt not just through a powerful elite, but also in schools.

For some of these learners this began in primary school, and has left them with little confidence and feelings of failure that have been carried in their psyche into adulthood. Class is no longer just the differences between the working class and middle class where one is judged on one's practices but, through subjectification, the ruling elite have created differences within the working class between those who are respectable and those who are non-respectable. The respectable working class are the ones who comply with a neo-liberal labour market and have exchange value. Shame is imposed on those who do not achieve employment. They are seen as the non-respectable working class. The learners in this study who live in deficit labour market areas have refuted this ideology and have found a different way to becoming respectable. Once educated through community adult education they have resisted being devalued, and as the stories reveal they have use-value by rebuilding the social fabric of their communities.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Rethinking exit, loyalty and voice**

#### **Introduction**

This study used Hirschman's (1970) model of Exit, Loyalty and Voice, to explore the ways in which learners involved in government employability training programmes and community adult education have found how their experience has contributed to rebuilding their lives (if at all).

Hirschman's (1970) tripartite framework sought to explain how people react to economic crisis when they are employed and threatened with potential job loss. Exit can mean attempts by workers to leave before the downturn hits them so that they can exert a degree of individual control over the timing of their departure and, if possible, make the transition into new employment rather than being made redundant. Loyalty involves workers trying to identify more closely with their firm so that, if and when cutbacks are made, their commitment to the company will favour them. Voice involves individual and collective effort to resist the imposition of cutbacks by the mobilisation of employee and political support. Furthermore, these reactions influence each other. Exit undermines loyalty and evades the need for voice. Loyalty is the opposite of voice but has similarities with exit as individuals seek to protect their individual interests. Of course, the meaning and significance of reactions at the level of the firm are likely to be different to that at the level of the community. For example, loyalty to a community may be an incentive and motivation for voice whereas loyalty to a company may mean workers display passive behaviour in order to remain employed. Loyalty, in this sense, reaffirms an individual's sense of disempowerment whereas loyalty to a community may produce a commitment to others: developing a voice and questioning the status quo by acting

back. In other words, the relationships between exit, loyalty and voice could significantly change in the context of the community.

A further aim of this study was to explore how adult education has changed in response to de- industrialisation. A decline in funding for community adult education in favour of learning for employability has rapidly increased the delivery of welfare to work programmes in de-industrialised areas. Community adult education now exists on the margins of education, often in terms of self-help provision or some other mutation of what was previously understood as community adult education. With this decline in mind my study compares and contrasts the purpose and process of community adult education, as distinct from the government's Employability Skills Programme. In doing so, I identify if 'exit' for work is working through this programme, and if community adult education has produced learners who are rebuilding their communities through loyalty and voice.

One of the central findings of this study is how employability programmes in this context achieve the opposite of what they claim. In Hirschman's terms, exit involves proactive employees moving ahead and taking control of their circumstances through individual acts of foresight. Instead, the argument of this chapter is how these programmes control learners and weaken them as subjects who, instead of expressing agency, become anxious and fearful. What they do is exit in a social sense from their communities by becoming inward-looking and separated from community life. This is in contrast to the experience of learners in community adult education, where the sense of loyalty takes on a different meaning. The experience of the study's informants is that it creates subjects who become empowered to take control of their situation and actively contribute to rebuilding their communities. In doing so, loyalty is not only linked to reclaiming one's respectability but also having more control over one's life; that is to say, finding a voice. This argument is substantiated below.

### **Employability programmes: the meaning of exit**

The trend towards employability programmes emphasises learning for the economy. The welfare to work programme is used to deliver the requirements of welfare reform to socially control and discipline unemployed labour through learning for employability that uses psychological interventions. This section is related to the aspect of exit where welfare claimants are mandated to attend training courses to become learners and gain the skills and attitudes for employability (which it is presumed they lack) in order to find (in)secure work.

The findings indicate that exit is not working – at least not in the sense officially intended. Exit implies a sense of purpose and direction, which is not the experience reported by informants. It is argued that “churning” (Sunley et al 2001, p.484) is a more accurate way of capturing how the lives of learners are controlled in a process which moves them between welfare and short-term government initiatives in a deficient local labour market. In the case of these learners, it has moved them into social exclusion from the economy, and their relative deprivation has contributed to them exiting their community in a social sense. Although in some respects these programmes provide a minimum lifeline of support, this is an unintended consequence rather than providing meaningful employment or community engagement.

The aim is to instil in the learner an acceptance of mandatory training with which they will have to comply in order to collect a welfare payment and thus find work. In doing so, the learner will be educated in the characteristics for employability and will become subordinate to an insecure labour market.

These learners do not have a collective working class identity that was “given” and inherited and supported by trade unions. An ideology of “individualization” suggested they were freed from these traditional roles to transform their “identity” from a “given” into a “task” for which they were individually responsible (Bauman,



2000, pp.31-32). They have been given this freedom to shape and choose an “identity” by law (de jure) but in reality this may not occur (de facto), as it requires resources these learners do not have (Bauman, 2007, p.58). Individualisation meant “dis-embedding”, or disrupting what already existed, such as traditional ways of working, and replacing it with new ways of working. This has chronically dis-embedded these learners, who have never had a secure identity. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, (2002, p.203), “dis-embedded individuals” have been handed the authority to take control of their lives and given responsibility due to the “privatization of decision making processes in developing one’s own biography”. According to Bauman (2000, p.34), “Individualization is a fate, not a choice” and fate had dealt these learners a blow for which they, and not the state, have to take personal responsibility.

As discussed in chapter three, through lifelong learning policies the purpose of adult education became linked to people’s individual skills development for economic competitiveness and the prosperity of the country, and for social inclusion of the unemployed into skills training for an occupational trade. Adult education became a “mere instrument of the economy” for wealth creation, and was expected to resolve an economic crisis that had created high unemployment in the 1980s (Coffield, 1999, p.480). The purpose of mandatory training, however, is not meaningful skills development for an occupational trade but is repetitive discipline for the long-term unemployed to be job ready to enter the labour market.

The shift from skills training to employability skills training emerged when the Luxembourg Strategy, 1997 (cited in Brine, 2006, pp.649-652) significantly shifted the understanding of “employment” to a new aim of “employability” which is defined as the responsibility and ability of an individual to become employable. The individual must be in a state of constantly becoming ready for the labour market, through repetitive training, in order to exit unemployment for work. The strategy also significantly changed the understanding of ‘disadvantage’ from one of being socially

excluded due to structural inequalities to one that apportioned blame to the individual for their disadvantaged circumstances.

Employability training is a central component within Welfare Reform Bills passed between 2009 and 2013. As part of the Welfare Reform Act, 2009, the coalition government, in 2011, introduced Workfare. Workfare requires the welfare claimant to comply with the strict and conditional requirements of the welfare system and attend mandatory employability skills training to prove that they are working for their welfare benefits. The concept of employability has become closely tied to stricter Welfare Reform Acts and policies that, since 2011, have reconfigured the Welfare State into a Workfare State. The Welfare Reform Bill (2011) became the Welfare Reform Act (2012) followed by the Jobseekers (Back to Work Scheme) Act (2013). These acts of parliament emphasised mandatory work activity training schemes for welfare claimants who are to be subjected to “psychological conditionality” whereby they must demonstrate certain attitudes or attributes in order to receive benefits. In government policy, the concept of employability is not just about developing employability skills to secure a job. Employability has a role in tackling the social inclusion of those who are marginalised from the labour market by mandating them to attend government programmes focused on employability skills in order to control their time.

This is intended to bring about a reduction in the welfare bill by claimants acquiring the characteristics for employability to move off welfare into insecure work to meet the demands of the economy. It is a way of persuading the taxpayer that welfare claimants are working for their benefit. This is undertaken in the name of adult education.

As part of a new, conditional workfare system, employability programmes are significantly different from past government training interventions where people were entitled to social welfare and were not subordinated to the requirements of the

welfare state. In contrast, the workfare state requires its welfare claimants not only to take up insecure work but also to attend unpaid work placements. This changes the nature of employment training to work for no remuneration and, at the same time, is increasing the wealth of employers whilst increasing poverty levels in the lives of learners. It also subordinates learners to comply with psychological interventions such as “positive affect” that are expected to produce aspiration, confidence and a positive attitude for employability with little or no return. The curriculum of these programmes is employer-led rather than learner-led.

Through the following process the learner is expected to achieve employability status: (1) “work focused interviews” to assess work prospects and identify activities, training and work opportunities to enhance the claimant’s job prospects (2) “work preparation” to improve their personal presentation at interviews in order to increase their chances of paid work, skills assessments, training and work experience through placements (3) “work placements” including mandatory work activity for employability programme learners of four weeks unpaid work. In addition, those learners who have been on a government programme for two or more years may be required to attend a mandatory work placement for a minimum of 26 weeks (4) “work search”, which is looking for and applying for jobs, producing a CV, and registering with an employment agency (Simmons, 2011, pp.1-4). Within this strict, mandatory Employability Skills Programme, welfare claimants are also expected to learn. They are to acquire employability skills, but there is also a focus on literacy and numeracy, personal communication skills, information technology, problem solving, team working and customer care. Some NVQ level 2 qualifications are on offer as are low-level qualifications in Health and Safety at Work, First Aid at Work, Food Hygiene, and Fork Lift Truck Driving. This narrowly focused government programme is tailored to the specific needs of local employers, and intended to help the unemployed compete for jobs in different sectors (Skills Funding Statement 2012-2015, pp.10-11). Learners must electronically submit all applications they make for work via the Job Search government website for the government to electronically surveille their progress at a distance before calling them to interview to account for why they remain unemployed.

Although the purpose of “Employability Skills” training has been aimed at reducing the welfare bill and promoting to taxpayers that the unemployed are working for their benefit, there is also a hidden political agenda. This involves the implementation of a massive increase in the number of government programmes which are about (1) social control and (2) to redirect attention away from the government for unemployment and a deficient labour market and place the blame on the individuals, who are seen as deficient in the characteristics required to make them employable and therefore in need of psychological interventions.

Although the programme ostensibly promotes social inclusion this is, arguably, a smokescreen as its key objective is more one of social control, as the programme creates the illusion that people are leaving their homes for work from 9am to 5pm when in fact they are monitored and ghettoised in panopticon conditions for a meagre welfare payment. The panopticon is a “laboratory for conducting experiments on human conduct”. Bentham (1875) used the principle of the panopticon in workhouses, and made it into a disciplinary programme of work where poor people learnt the appropriate conduct to improve themselves (Foucault cited in Walkderdine and Jiminez, 2012, p.20). The aim of the workhouse was to create the illusion that people were working for waged labour when in fact they were working for subsistence, and it can only be described as the workfare of that time. Their conduct and work were strictly monitored and life was made as unpleasant as possible as they were seen as a drain on public resources, as the priority was to return the poor to work through which the industrialists could create wealth. The conditionality of the panopticon workhouses is not dissimilar to the conditionality of the workfare programmes of today, whereby learners are conditioned to take up insecure work that is no way out of poverty but is for the wealth creation of the nation. The Employability Skills Programme, in working with marginalised people for employability, has created a model of social control. Social control models are programmes which are concerned solely with reinforcing the status quo of subjecting

the unemployed, through coercive measures, to enter employment (Johnston cited in Allen and Martin, 1992, p.67).

The idea that individuals have the freedom to determine their own fate is promoted through welfare reform policies where unemployed individuals, as active jobseekers, are given responsibility for finding work through employability training (Barratt cited in Danson et al., 2015, p.286). By promoting the freedom of individuals to choose an identity and determine their own fate, the state has encouraged individuals to seek “biographical solutions to systemic contradictions” (Beck cited in Bauman 2000, p.50). Like the learners in this study, individuals are expected to find their own solutions to problems that have been socially created through economic disorder by attending mandatory workfare provision. The programme does not provide solidarity whereby learners can share their private troubles with each other to become collective issues. Nor does the education provided in this programme provide freedom. Instead, these programmes are individualistic, as learners strive for the self-realisation of a new worker identity without it coming to fruition.

In the case of these learners, this has induced frustration, anxiety and fear as they have been given individual responsibility to achieve employability status but do not have the power to do so due to a deficient labour market. If they succumb to negativity this could lead them to having to take part in the psychological intervention of positive affect to change their attitude. The learners, like those in the panopticon workhouse, cannot dissent as they are complicit, submissive and socially controlled through the power of the state. Social control, however, has a friendly face that is supplied by a local person who is the employability skills trainer and who is complicit with the state in subjecting learners to coercive psychological interventions for jobs that in many cases do not exist.

One outcome of workfare is to redirect blame away from the government for a deficient labour market and to blame the learner, who is seen as deficit and lacking in

the characteristics for employability. According to Friedli & Stearn (2015, p.40) “unemployment is viewed as the personal failure and psychological deficit” of the individual. The use of psychological interventions in these programme attempts to “erase the experience and effects of social and economic inequalities, and to construct a psychological ideal that links unemployment to psychological deficit” within the individual (Friedli & Stearn, 2015, p.40). The use of adult education practice in applying psychological interventions of positive affect is expected to create a set of characteristics such as a positive attitude, improved behaviour and the right disposition for employability, and in doing so create new subjectivities to become subordinate to accepting insecure work. Central to the programme is the imposition of sanctions (loss of benefits) if an individual failed to comply with any aspect of the programme. It is believed that such interventions will change behaviours to enable these learners to obtain work, which is a paradox given the market failure in de-industrialised areas. Friedli & Stearn, explain:

There is no evidence that psychological conditionality increases likelihood of paid work but perpetuates psychological failure within the learner and shift attentions away from a depressed labour market.

(Friedli & Stearn, 2015, p.45)

In the case of these learners, submitting them to psychological interventions has not increased their chances of entering (in) secure work. What it has done is to construct feelings of inadequacy and frustration within the learner, as their goal of achieving a job has not been met. They have increased feelings of failure as the programme shifts the understanding of unemployment as not coming from market failure but, instead, being due to the personal failure of the learner whose attitude and behaviour have not been positive enough to find work.

The learners in this study constantly blame themselves for not being in work as they have been given the impression that they are deficient. These learners are very far away from the labour market due to having been unemployed for between one and eight years, and all are experiencing social exclusion because of being churned

between welfare, training and short-term jobs. The programme is reinforcing anxiety and reducing wellbeing in this group of learners through mental health difficulties. Psychological interventions aimed at subordinating the learner, to develop a personality made conducive to employability, has instead instilled within the learner feelings of anxiety and inadequacy.

The following accounts illustrate the coercive methods adopted by welfare to work, employability skill programmes that reinforce feelings of frustration, anxiety and failure in the learners. Exit with a purpose eludes all of these learners as their lives continue to be socially controlled through this government intervention. In this way exit takes on a different meaning as, in seeking to obtain the characteristics for employability to exit for work, exit has created a different subjectivity in these learners who are anxious and fearful.

The following accounts are evidenced by verbatim text from the life stories to illustrate that these learners attending employability skills programmes are not exiting into paid work:

**Brian** spent the first 6 years after leaving school ‘struggling to find work’. At the age of 22 years he entered the labour market for the first time ‘through an agency on a temporary basis’. Since then he has been intermittently employed on short-term agency contracts. This precarious work lasted until 2005 when, for the first time, he finally secured ‘permanent’ work. However, in the 2008 economic crisis his job was affected and eventually disappeared in 2010. Since 2010, he has had no choice but to claim welfare benefits. Since 2011, he has been mandated to attend temporary government programmes for employability skills, otherwise his benefits will be sanctioned and eventually stopped. Brian explains his frustration at the repetitive nature of the Employability Skills Programme, ‘for 2 years [I] do the basics on how to look for jobs, how to do CVs, how to act at work, how to treat people at work, how to respect other people’. He is mandated to use these employability skills to seek work by applying for non-existent jobs through the Yellow Pages telephone directory or by cold calling employers to ask if they have work. He explains his long term struggle to find work while in attendance at these programmes and the rejection he

faces from employers, 'The Yellow Pages...apply...apply...apply...I have been struggling since... 2010...have been trying to get a full or part time vacancy...just been struggling...I phoned one of the call centres before...how can you have experience if you can't get a job...you have to get a job to get experience...give me a try out and see what I am like...it is just a setback'. He begins to express anger at his situation, 'I am a bit annoyed about it as I am struggling as it is to get off benefits to get full time work...it is just hard work...Yea [been] training for...2 years...and you get setbacks'. Despite having feelings of dismay, self-blame and a loss of hope he must continue to comply with the psychological conditionality of being job ready. He indicates 'I am...going round in circles getting nowhere'.

**Kevin** has been employed in numerous short-term, low-paid, unskilled factory jobs through agencies. Kevin explains, 'it's all agency work and so there is no steady full time job'. His last job was in 2011 and with no further opportunity of work on offer he has been treated for depression. For the last four years Kevin has had to adhere to the strict conditional requirements of welfare to work schemes that have required mandatory attendance on a number of employability skills training initiatives. Kevin finds each training provider's referral system to these programmes is complex and seems to be in the interest of the provider rather than meeting the needs of the learner, '[they are] not well explained...and you are passed from pillar to post'. Despite its disciplinarian approach, Kevin sees each programme as a 'stepping stone...[to] becoming more confident' and prefers these panopticon conditions to being 'stuck in the house 24/7...with the same people...[where] tensions get high'. Through mandatory workfare arrangements and its psychological conditionality methods, Kevin has been mandated to attend a '7 week...temporary [unwaged] job' as part of working for his welfare benefits. Kevin complies with this requirement otherwise he will be sanctioned. This is no solution to finding secure work, as it will probably lead to further welfare recycling.

**Ben**, since leaving college in 1992 with no qualifications, explains that his time has been spent 'on the dole' as a long-term unemployed welfare claimant, with the



exception of three low-waged, short-term contracts in factories. He last worked eight years ago and such a long period of social exclusion from the workplace has contributed to a loss of confidence and poor physical and mental health. Ben explains:

It's affected me health and since I've been out of work I've lost me self-confidence...on anti-depressants for years and two year ago heart attacks through stress...confidence was that low a few year ago I took an overdose.

Ben explains that he was previously on Employment Support Allowance for his health problems but is now in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance. Consequently, he has been mandated to attend welfare to work, employability skills schemes, where he must work for his welfare benefits. Ben sees the benefits of the programme as helping him to get back into a routine and to socialise with people. Ben explains, 'it just being with people or just getting up and out of the house'. Through mandatory workfare arrangements and its psychological conditionality methods, Ben is mandated to take up a short-term, seven-week contract otherwise he will be sanctioned. Ben complies with this arrangement for unwaged work but it is not a solution to his complex needs, as it will probably lead to further welfare recycling.

**Henry** has experienced long periods of unemployment mixed with attendance at welfare to work schemes. Now in his forties, he describes his employment history as 'patchy...in and out of factory work'. Henry found the benefits of engaging in welfare to work employability skills schemes were better than being isolated at home as 'it made me feel...it was nice to be doing something'. However, this feeling did not last long as he has become anxious and feels insecure as he is most concerned about the Job Centre Plus universal job match system that monitors the number of job applications he makes. Henry vividly describes the effects of the welfare reform system and its psychological conditionality methods for finding work on himself and other claimants:

It's now more stricter on the dole now and I have to go on this job thing every day. I have to go on the job's match...before it wasn't as

difficult...it has made me feel more pressurised and every time you sign on you are always worried that you haven't done everything just right because they will stop your money you know...yeah...definitely a bad thing like. I know a lot of people say it's like, light a fire under us, as we have to please them rather than focus on your job search.

Participation in welfare to work initiatives have been a lifeline to Henry as they have prevented him from becoming socially isolated. But these programmes have not provided him with secure employment despite complying with the JCP universal match system. The psychological conditional requirements of the programme have increased feelings of anxiety and fear in Henry.

To conclude, the purpose of learning for employability through these programmes, which is to exit into the labour market, is not working. Exit occurs due to deterioration or dissatisfaction with a product (Hirschman 1970, p.4). In this case, deterioration has been due to structural changes in the economy that have created a precarious and deficit labour market. Exit for these learners can be defined as exclusion from, rather than inclusion in, the economy.

### **De-industrialisation: exit from the community**

In this study, learners attending employability skills programmes are not only excluded from the economy but, due to the relative poverty within which they live, they have also been socially excluded from engaging in the civic and social functions of their communities. These factors have resulted in them exiting from their community in a social sense and remaining behind closed doors. They remain passive in their communities by giving nothing back to the community. The state, in not showing loyalty to them in providing meaningful work and a living wage, is receiving no return except by mandating them to work for their welfare benefits to keep the taxpayer happy.

These learners are now identified as “outsiders on the inside” in a lifelong learning system that socially controls rather than liberates them (Bourdieu and Champagne, cited in Reay 2006, p.298). In the case of these learners, they have received a poor formal education from which they have emerged with few or no qualifications. Living in de-industrialised areas they have struggled since leaving school to find work. Having been mandated to go on to government employability programmes with their inbuilt psychological conditionality, they remain fixed in these de-industrialised areas. There is one learner who is an exception as he received a public school and university education but even he is unable to exit unemployment for work and remains fixed in this geographical place. These working class, unemployed men do not exit by crossing over into work or out of poverty, or cross over from being working class to middle class with all the privilege this brings. This has resulted in relative deprivation that has brought about their exit in a social sense from the civic and social functions of community life and being churned to the point of social exclusion from the economy.

The learners themselves tell us that they have all experienced no work in the last one to eight years. They have all been socially isolated at home for long periods of time (which often causes family disputes) before recycling back into the next government programme which, despite its disciplinary approach and how ‘frustrated’ it makes them feel, offers social inclusion and routine back into their lives. They do not seek to challenge the state on the strict conditional requirements of this programme but bend to its demands as there is no alternative. They do recognise the way the state, through welfare reform, is ‘lighting a fire underneath us’ and how capitalism, through its precarious economy, makes opportunities for jobs ‘patchy’ but they recognise that these dominant structural forces are outside of their control. They have come to see the employability trainer as a friendly helper rather than their surveiller who socially controls them.

Exit in Hirschman’s study tended to emphasise the agentic as well as the individual dimension of responses to the threat of losing work. Individuals are forward thinking,

plan ahead, and are “ahead of the curve” as they move on. Ties to locality are regarded as insignificant or even as a weakness. Exit in this context, as applied to mandatory training, does the opposite. It demotivates, turns people inwards, and whilst it reduces ties to the community it does so without giving individuals the support to move forward. Instead of being more agentic they are less able to take the initiative, and the process undermines any types of capitals they might have possessed and depresses rather than inspires hope. Exit in this sense has similarities to Hirschman’s model in that voice and loyalty are diminished as a result and this prevents “recuperation” of communities (Hirschman 1970, p.120).

The deterioration of their communities, the lack of economic investment, increasing socio-economic inequalities, welfare reform, the lack of respect they receive from the media and politicians, and the coercion rather than liberation experienced on the Employability Skills Programme, which is not a place where they can express their discontent, has brought about their retreat and absence from their community. In doing so, their relationship with the government has not just declined but broken down. Hirshman (1994, p.272) points out “dissatisfaction with the surrounding social order leads to flight rather than fight, to withdrawal of the dissatisfied group...by combining deviance and defiance they are actually closer to voice”. Through exiting in a social sense they have given way to a passive voice and this enables the government to easily maintain social control, but in the long term the government may have a high price to pay for their flight. De-industrialised communities such as these have always been seen as the “slack” and surplus to requirements within economic society (Hirschman, 1970, p.12). The “slack”, according to (Hirschman 1970, p.13), can only be addressed through “revolutionary changes [that] can tap and liberate the abundant but dormant, repressed, or alienated energies of the people” (Hirschman 1970, p.13)

Deindustrialisation had a similar impact on the community adult education sample in this study. Initially, they too retreated (exited) from interactions with others due to the effects of de-industrialisation. Once ontological security that was maintained

through a gendered organisation of work, kinship practices and other routine affective practices found in everyday social and cultural life was broken, this traditional way of life became fragmented. This loss of routine brought about a shift from ontological security to ontological insecurity and ruptured the stable mental state of these communities (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012, p.48). The atomisation of these communities and the loss of routine within everyday life were to change a way of life for both men and women and their future generations who came to be seen as having no “value”. According to Skeggs (2013, p.2), the value of an individual is seen in monetary terms of being of economic value to generate wealth for the economy. People living in de-industrialised communities are seen to have little exchange value for the economy and are not recognised as a “subject of value”. According to Skeggs (2013, p.6), a “subject of value” is a “self that works to accumulate its own value in its own interests...at the exclusion of others”.

The participants in this study are not “subjects of value” in economic terms, as through the long-term effects of de-industrialisation they have consequently found themselves in unfavourable socio-economic circumstances, including poor mental health. These circumstances have brought about their engagement with community adult education where they have become empowered through different models of adult education to have ‘use value’ for their communities. Once educated they put to good use their working class values of care and compassion in a collective way to support others. According to Skeggs (2005, p.965):

White working class women need to shift perspective from exchange value to use -value. Use- values can only be known when they are put to use, so they force a focus on the ability to access and use culture.

Community adult education is different from the government’s Employability Skills Programme in that it does not use coercion. Instead it seeks the approval, consent, agreement of the learner, and negotiates with them a curriculum that meets their needs. In doing so, it establishes trust with the learners, who engage in dialogue on issues that matter in their lives, as well as offering them opportunities to engage in bringing about social change. This approach nurtures voice and loyalty, rather than

exit from their deteriorating communities. Learners may come to see they have some degree of control over situations they thought were beyond their control. In addition, community adult education projects not only build trust but also provide a sense of belonging to a new community. Learners are given time and attention, they are given respect, they are provided with opportunities of their choice, their isolation is reduced and they are seen to have “use value” (Skeggs 2005, p.965). This counteracts exit, and these community learners stay to fight: they do not take flight and become complacent, as is the case with the Employability Skills Programme learners, who exited in a social sense. In remaining loyal and using their once unheard voices they seek to bring about change from within their communities. In doing so, they contribute to rebuilding their deteriorating communities.

To recap, for the Employability Skills Programme learners the individualising response of exit means that there is little hope of success when the problem is a systemic failure in the labour market. ‘Exit’ from the community in a social sense is an inevitable result of relative deprivation and mistrust of the state. In this context, the meaning of exit has more negative connotations, which have been to develop a new subjectivity that is anxious and has feelings of inadequacy. In contrast, the community adult education sample do not attempt to exit into a neoliberal labour market nor exit from the community in a social sense. Through community adult education their subjectivity has been strengthened as they have come to have ‘use value’ for their communities rather than the economy. Their education has nurtured within them loyalty and voice to rebuild their communities.

### **Loyalty and voice**

For Hirschman, loyalty and voice were mutually incompatible in that loyalty involved acquiescence to managerial prerogatives; the loyal individual worker would be protected by ‘keeping their head down’ (or so the logic of the response assumes).

Voice, on the other hand, involved collective solidarity and organisation to contest layoffs of employees. In the context of community, loyalty becomes a form of resistance to callous notions that people can simply uproot themselves, abandon their ties to others, and simply take care of themselves. In this study, loyalty to the community can be seen as a form of support and nurturing as a resource for finding a voice. But this does not simply happen. The ontological insecurity affecting the cohort of people involved in adult education had a very similar effect on people's sense of self and their capacity to act. It was purposeful intervention – by different forms of adult education – that enabled loyalty and voice to be developed.

In contrast to the dominant economic model of adult education the different traditions within community adult education of personal development, and radical and social purpose education, have a different purpose. These traditions offered those experiencing socio-economic inequalities an education related to the social reality of their lives, and enabled them to challenge and change oppressive structures. Where the economic model for learning for employability is a model of social control, these alternative traditions provided a democratic process of adult education (Alexander cited in Barr 1999, p.17). In this study, loyalty and voice were produced within this democratic process of adult education that would enable learners to make a valuable contribution to community life.

The evidence for this section draws on a small sample of 6 women and 2 men who voluntarily participated in community adult education that has reinvigorated their lives and given them a sense of purpose. The findings indicate that 'loyalty' is working, through a strong attachment by 3 women learners to their women's learning community whereby women help to rebuild the lives of other learners and in doing so act as a lifeline to each other. Findings also indicate that the 3 women and 2 men contributed to rebuilding their communities through a network of relationships that enabled their communities to function more effectively. Through this process their often-unheard 'voices' are strengthened as they unite with each other and the wider community in challenging social inequalities through further grassroots practice of

community adult education. In doing so, their 'loyalty' enables them to reclaim their respectability after this has been lost by the demise of the traditional roles of men and women.

The personal development model of community adult education provides a starting point from which to begin to learn. People have different starting points which motivate them to learn, and that sets them off in different trajectories. Personal development can be the positive experience that enables people to connect with others and to progress to another stage with new-found confidence. How people start and where they end up may be very different. Personal development can also offer a liberating learning experience to those seeking a purpose in life and who want to begin to see life differently.

Alternatively, it can also be identified with therapeutic education that is associated with a curriculum based on happiness and wellbeing, to build emotional resilience and make individuals feel happier and more positive. I argue against Ecclestone and Hayes (2009, p.86) who claim that therapeutic education is corrosive. They claim that it diminishes the idea of individuals as agents who can fulfil their potential by transforming their lives and contributing to bringing about social change to individuals who are helpless and passive. In other words, therapeutic education pathologises its learners. In this study, therapeutic education was a starting point for women who engaged in personal development courses in safe spaces (Hill Collins, 2000, p.101).

Personal development education in this sense is about a struggle for women to end the subordination that has dominated their lives through patriarchal oppression and systems of thought. These women were not positioned within this self-help women's community project as being psychologically deficit but as women who were located in a community that had been demoralised by de-industrialisation that had brought about increasing patriarchal oppression and social inequalities in their lives.



Women's education that challenged traditional assumptions about women's role in society, as well as offering therapeutic education, was a starting point for personal development. This enabled these women to begin to construct new knowledge and challenge patriarchal oppression and oppressive structures. With time these women participated in return to learn courses to achieve a qualification, and in the long term they have shown 'loyalty' to their learning community as well as making a very valuable contribution to the wider community. Hill Collins describes the purpose of "safe places":

Safe places are prime locations for women to resist the dominant culture's definition of them...and provide the opportunity for self-definition which is the power to name one's own reality.

(Hill Collins, 2000, p.101)

The learning process provides mostly informal education for individuals and groups, and may provide them with an awareness of their oppressive structures and the dominant culture within which they live. They become aware of their ability to act and have a voice on behalf of themselves and others to challenge inequality. Personal development may increase confidence, reduce isolation, and provide mutual support as well as introducing the learner to broader social networks. It may act as a precursor to the radical tradition in the empowerment of an individual or group as it can become a liberating experience as learners begin to challenge oppression and inequalities that they face within their communities. In doing so, this is an education that is closely associated with "everyday life" (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.10).

In adult education, learners are treated as citizens who have something to contribute to others and their community. This is in contrast to where the learners on the welfare to work training programmes are seen to be psychologically deficit as they are unemployed. A Freirean critical pedagogy enables learners to become critical thinkers and this enables knowledge to be actively constructed between learners and

tutors. In doing so, the private problems of individuals can become collective issues for social action and political engagement. This is an empowering process that, unlike employability training, values the experiences and contributions of learners. In doing so, it creates in the learners an awareness that they are no longer disempowered. Loyalty in this sense is closely related not just to respectability but also to the ability to have control over one's life and bring transformation to the lives of others. This process nurtures voice and loyalty within learners, making them less likely to exit their deteriorating communities. Through loyalty, learners may come to see they have some degree of control over situations that they once thought were beyond their control. Hirschman (1970, p.77) points out "Loyalty makes exit less likely, but it does by the same token, give more scope to voice...the likelihood of voice increases with the degree of loyalty". Community education learners in this study participated in personal development education and did not take flight and become complacent, as was the case with the government programme learners who exited in a social sense. These community learners stayed to fight. In remaining loyal and using their once unheard voices they seek to bring about change from within their communities. In this way, the different traditions of community adult education can be seen as a resource for resistance against deteriorating communities and social inequalities. Hirschman points out:

Loyalty far from being irrational, can serve the socially useful purpose of preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative...[however] most loyalist behaviour retains an enormous dose of reasoned calculation.

Hirshman (1970, p.79)

Theresa, Cathy and Lilly attended a personal development programme at a women's learning and support community centre. This provided women-only safe places where women could become a lifeline to each other by sharing their past patriarchal oppressive experiences and challenge traditional assumptions about women's roles in a de-industrialised culture. Personal development education was a starting point for them in returning to informal learning, which offered therapeutic education that

included counselling and listening support services. This was followed by a women's education programme called 'New Me' that enabled these women to define who they were and to turn their lives around from being victims to becoming more confident subjects to engaging in return to learn courses for a qualification. Once educated, the women reclaimed their independence and respectability and, ultimately, their voice and began to show their loyalty to this women's learning community by rebuilding the lives of others. Maureen, Isobel, Hilda, Billy and Barry attended different community adult education courses as a starting point when returning to education for the first time since leaving school and have shown loyalty through rebuilding their communities in a variety of ways.

All of the following accounts are evidenced by verbatim text taken from life stories to illustrate the different ways in which learners who attended community adult education programmes have shown loyalty to their communities and in doing so their voices that were once marginalised come to be heard:

**Theresa** is a qualified community tutor and counsellor. She works in a part time paid role teaching a women's education programme within the Women's Learning and Support Community Centre. In addition, she also works as a volunteer for the centre in the following ways (1) counselling women learners with mental health difficulties (2) representing the women's centre at National Health Service and Mental Health Team meetings to improve mental health services within the community.

**Cathy** works as a volunteer within the Women's Learning and Support Community Centre to provide a Listening Service to women who are experiencing patriarchal oppression and mental health issues. She also provides a point of contact for women seeking to attend the centre by providing them with information on what this service can offer.

**Lily** has a Level 3 Counselling Qualification. She works as a volunteer within the Women's Learning and Support Community Centre to provide a counselling service to women learners with drug and alcohol addictions. She has also worked as a volunteer in the local Citizens Advice Bureau providing information and guidance to those with debt problems.

**Maureen** returned to education after the Miners' Strike by attending an access course that was delivered in the evening at an outreach community college. Maureen progressed to a College of Further Education and qualified as a community tutor. She has worked in different roles in community education: from a community education tutor to a community education co-ordinator. In this role she ensured the strategic delivery of courses took place to provide educational opportunities in the most declining of mining communities. She has progressed to becoming the manager of Adult Education and Training provision in a voluntary sector organisation that offers adult education and the Employability Skills Programme. Maureen has shown loyalty to this former coalfield community by working through tough times in community adult education. She has used her voice in encouraging generations of ex-mining families to participate in learning. She is seen as a role model to other working class women who seek to find a purposeful existence living in this austere place.

**Isobel** started to drop in at her village community centre and began to attend informal learning and meetings which gave her insight into the role of a volunteer on local committees. She attended a plethora of community adult education courses at different centres. Here, she gained a qualification in paralegal law based on law that affects community centres. In addition, she was educated in project management and the writing of funding applications. This equipped her with the knowledge and skills to take up volunteering. It also connected her to a wide range of voluntary and community sector agencies in her area. Isobel has undertaken different volunteer roles that demanded a great deal of responsibility and commitment from her. She has been required to work on many complex community issues. She has made successful funding applications for projects and co-ordinated a voluntary sector

health project that recruited volunteers to help those from the community who were in hospital. She has been a board member of a voluntary sector organisation and finally returned to volunteer at the community centre in the village where she made her first steps towards learning. Here, she began to undertake challenging and high profile volunteer roles that have enabled her to contribute to the social and physical regeneration of this former mining village. Her volunteer role as Chair of the Village Regeneration Partnership saw her involvement with the building of a new community centre, the demolition of council housing, and the building of new social and private housing in this former colliery village. Currently she is Director of the Board of the new community centre that seeks funding to provide different social activities for all age groups, as well as finding funding for maintaining the centre now that it is no longer in the ownership of the local authority.

**Hilda's** interest in local history attracted her to join a local history class. The group identified that they wished to focus on the social and economic history of their ex-colliery village. This course was informal and took place in the village community centre. As part of the group, Hilda met with local families to collect relevant photographs that could be used for an exhibition of the history of the village. Through the local history course, Hilda has become a volunteer. She has made a very valuable contribution in educating the local and wider community through the creation of an exhibition of photographs to remind local people, and especially school children and young people, of their mining heritage and of what life was like in a working mining community. She has taken the exhibition to libraries, schools and community centres to encourage people to be proud of their heritage. She continues in her volunteer role as she stores and updates the archive of the exhibition at the community centre.

**Billy** was a redundant coalminer who became employed as a part time support worker to special needs young people at a local community college. While doing so, the college encouraged him to attend the 7307 Teaching Certificate for Adults to become a community tutor working with special needs learners. Since qualifying and working as a community tutor Billy has, for more than twenty years, undertaken a

number of paid, but different, community learning champion roles. In these roles he has promoted educational opportunities and engaged young people and adults living in deprived communities into community education. He became Learning Co-ordinator for this former coalfield district, ensuring funding and adult education opportunities were made available. He has been made redundant once again from his most recent post, which was working for the public sector with young people from the former coalfield area. This is due to government austerity measures to cut budgets in the public sector for its work in deprived communities. Billy has secured a further four- month contract with a voluntary and community sector agency to build up partnerships on behalf of the agency. All his jobs have been short-term contracts in the public and community sector and so Billy has lived a precarious existence since being declared redundant from coalmining and entering community adult education.

**Barry** returned to community adult education through a Sure Start programme for dads. Since being nominated to become the volunteer Chair of the Dad's Group, austerity measures have caused budget cuts to the Sure Start's Dad's Group. Barry, as chair of the group, has been required to undertake a complex volunteer role as he has had to manage the group's transition from Sure Start, where it previously had plenty of government funding, to become an independent voluntary and community project with a constitution. As chair, he is now responsible for applying to different funding sources to ensure the delivery of adult education courses to disadvantaged men in his community. Barry's role as Chair of the Dad's Group has raised his profile in this community and he was invited by a health voluntary and community sector organisation to become a volunteer and become a member of their management committee. In addition to this volunteer role, he is also the Health Project's volunteer digital champion. In this role he facilitates IT courses to help welfare claimants to complete online forms to apply for benefits and conduct job searches. Barry increased in confidence and successfully applied for a volunteer role as a school governor. This introduced him to a professional training programme for the role. He has now completed governor training, a Safeguarding and Child Protection course and a course in budget management. Community adult education

was not just a way of offering him courses but it gave him an awareness of the issues affecting his community, and how he could contribute in rebuilding his community.

Community adult education provided a starting point from which these learners began to learn. In these cases, people had different starting points which motivated them to learn, and that set them off in different directions to become volunteers or paid workers in community adult education. In doing so, they began to rebuild the lives of others experiencing social inequalities, and rebuild the decaying social and physical fabric of their communities by taking responsibility for complex roles and engaging in wider social networks of relationships that contributed to the common good. In doing so, they have shown loyalty to their community, and their voice, which had been oppressed in the past, was heard. Those who took up paid work in community adult education have only had short-term contracts and a precarious existence as the priority for funding is learning for the economy. Community adult education, as evidenced in this study, is a tremendous force in sustaining communities. This is largely through the loyalty of these learners who became volunteers and future short-term paid workers. Community adult education has been a lifeline to these learners, as by showing 'loyalty' to their communities in the ways identified in this study, this has not only enabled them to reclaim their respectability but has also helped them gain control over their lives.

To conclude, these different traditions of adult education challenge a culture of individualism and of looking after yourself at the expense of others: the exit approach of Hirschman's model. Central to these forms of adult education is a critical pedagogy and a collective approach in working with others in a network of relationships to seek solutions to personal needs and structural problems that impact on everyday life. This process nurtures loyalty and voice and diminishes exit from deteriorating communities. Community adult education, as the catalyst for loyalty and voice, contributes to preventing further deterioration within communities. These traditions of community adult education can therefore be seen as a resource for resistance against deterioration and social inequalities and in producing subjects who

are stronger and more confident in taking action and claiming their rights. In doing so, they are more in control of their lives.

## **Conclusion**

This study has applied Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, loyalty, and voice to a community setting. In doing so, the study reveals how the theory of exit, loyalty and voice can be conceived quite differently from its original context. Ways in which learners involved in government employability skills programmes and community adult education have or have not rebuilt their lives and that of their communities were compared and contrasted. This has provided valuable insight into how people become socially controlled or liberated depending upon what model of adult learning they attend and how they respond as a consequence of their education. 'Exit' is seen not to be working through the Employability Skills Programme, with community adult education producing learners who rebuild their communities through loyalty and voice.

The Employability Skills Programme and the liberating models of community adult education create very different subjectivities as a consequence of a very different pedagogy. The Employability Skills Programme is strict and conditional and has psychological interventions where learners are subordinated to its prescriptive requirements. This does not provide exit to work but it does produce learners who are reactive, anxious, fearful, insecure subjects who have exited in a social sense from their community. Community adult education, through its liberating models, produces a new subjectivity of one who is empowered to take control and bring about change in his/her life and that of others through loyalty and voice. Community adult education has, through loyalty and voice, diminished exit thus strengthening communities and mobilising them for social action thus "preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative" (Hirschman 1970, p.79). Alternatively, the Employability Skills Programme diminished loyalty and voice, as its learners exited in a social sense which "prevents recuperation of communities" (Hirschman 1970, p.120).



The demise of the traditions of community adult education in favour of the dominant model of learning for the economy through the Employability Skills Programme has been accelerated by welfare reforms. What local authority community-based adult education that exists is under-resourced due to the shift in funding for learning for the economy. Austerity measures saw further cuts to this service offered through the voluntary and community sectors. Socio-economic inequalities are increasing and there are no spaces provided through community adult education for local people to receive an education related to their everyday lives or become collective in acting back against the state. In this study, a public working class education with a radical approach was not to be found.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

This study has offered a unique opportunity to highlight the discounted lives of people who have experienced a major trauma to their communities, their families and themselves through the de-industrialisation of the coal mining and steel industries in County Durham. The study also offered the opportunity to examine if lifelong learning through employability skills programmes could heal fractured identities or if community adult education, through its liberating models, was a more restorative approach?

The following text is structured in relation to answering the research questions of the study:

1. What general impact has de-industrialisation had on four communities in County Durham (1972-present)?
2. How has adult education changed in response to de-industrialisation in the same communities?
3. What have been the major effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of the learners in the sample from these communities?
4. How has adult education shaped the position, disposition and identity of the learners studied?
5. Does Hirschman's theoretical model of responses to change provide a useful framework for understanding the experience of adult learners?

### **What general impact has de-industrialisation had on four communities in County Durham (1972-present)?**

De-industrialisation of the coal mining and steel making areas of County Durham brought social trauma to local communities that were dependent on these companies for work. Neoliberal governance and policies instigated de-industrialisation and replaced the traditional industries with flexible capitalism through service sector industries. In restructuring the economy in this way it transformed the meaning of work, from that of long-term secure employment to short-term, precarious employment. Precarious employment is insecure and as such it has affected the formation of the self through increasing anxiety in the individual. People are no longer 'born into' their identities, as in the past, but are given the responsibility to construct an identity – individualisation - in circumstances where they do not have the resources or power to do so. Failure to construct an identity is, then, the fault of the individual and not the state, which supports capitalists through its policies, which have generated precarious employment. The precariat ( in Standing's terms as explained in Chapter 2, p.46) are presented with endless 'churning' experiences and are surveilled through welfare to work programmes and poor quality training. Being subjected to this process, they have few employment protection rights, and are on constant demand to a deficit market that offers a few short-term, insecure work opportunities that do not lead to permanent employment (Standing 2011, pp.7 & 12-14).

The restructuring of the economy has also brought about significant transformations in working class communities. It has restructured their way of life from one of established patterns of work routine, and collective security through trade unions, to an insecure existence that has increased individual anxiety. Insecurity and its consequences are normalised, as the unemployed must conform to the new standard norm of a nine to five attendance at employability skills programmes in the pretence that they are securing an opportunity for permanent work. This is no replacement for

paid, secure employment with the respect that this brings but, rather, is a way in which the time of the unemployed is socially controlled.

Restructuring of the economy has also resulted in the re-shaping of the working class. Work was traditionally a way of allocating status for men. The role played by women within the family and through kinship in the community gave them respectability. One effect of de-industrialisation was the loss of status, most overtly for men but also for women. Being socially positioned in this way, but also through de-industrialisation, the working class has been reconfigured into the “precarariat who are the insecure fringes of the new proletariat” (Waquant, 2008, p.246). This does not, however, mean that social class has gone away as a major factor in our understanding of the consequences of de-industrialisation, rather that social class identities and collective organisation are much harder to forge, as they have become fragmented because of it. As a result, social divisions are intensified.

This socio-economic restructuring of work and class has brought about, to some degree, a reversal of traditional gender roles, as women have entered into a feminised, flexible labour market from which men have been excluded or are reluctant to engage with. This has brought about a crisis in masculinity. A culture of anomie exists, as men have been unable to adjust to being cast off through de-industrialisation and the alternative precarious economic experience offered. Many remain parochial in their thinking and isolated in a social sense, and are drifting without a future despite the neoliberal rhetoric of being ‘free to choose’ an identity. These men do not have the resources to do so. This has contributed to poor mental health in these communities, which, in some circumstances, results in domestic violence against women and alcohol abuse (see chapter 1 Appendices 2 & 3).

Powerless social groups usually bear the brunt of social change, and the experience of de-industrialisation is no exception. Women are likely to live austere lives as they

continue to manage family life through hard times of significant financial loss. The demise of their social class means that they are subjected to being re-labelled and devalued by politicians and the media as abject people having no value.

Moreover, de-industrialisation continues to live on through the memory of the social trauma that occurred at the time when the community suffered the loss of its respectability through the closures of industries, no work, and a loss of traditional gendered roles. It also continues to live on through neoliberal policies that continue to fragment and prevent the restoration of working class lives through secure, meaningful work and the formation of solidaristic, collective identities that existed in the past.

To conclude, the restructuring of the economy has transformed the meaning of work and a traditional way of life that has brought about the re-shaping of the working class, who now live an insecure existence that increases anxiety amongst the population.

### **How has adult education changed in response to de-industrialisation in the same communities?**

Historically, the industrial trainer in public adult education was central to educating the workforce to make industry operate effectively, and was tied to the demands of the economy through the needs of employers. In contrast to this dominant economic model of education, alternative traditions of public adult education emerged from the 1970s onwards. These alternative traditions were the liberating, personal development, radical and social purpose models that had a community based focus. These models offered those experiencing socio-economic inequalities, as a consequence of de-industrialisation, an education related to the social reality of their lives.

These alternative traditions of public adult education were undermined by European and UK lifelong learning policies from the late 1980s onwards. This diminished lifelong education policy in favour of lifelong learning for the economy. The European Union has been a key player in this as it sought to address high unemployment as having the potential to create political and social instability, a lack of social cohesion, and social exclusion. Lifelong learning was not just about employment but also social inclusion. It was also seen as one of the solutions to the economic and social crisis: reconfiguring adult education to the needs of the economy. In doing so, community adult education suffered a demise and became controlled through neoliberal governmentality. The dominant social character of adult education has become economic i.e. the only thing it focuses on is an economic rationale.

A key conceptual and ideological shift has been central to the above pattern, that is, the rise of employability rather than a focus on unemployment. Employability is the responsibility and ability of an individual to become employed rather than, necessarily, the state of employment itself. Thus, individualisation became linked with the concept of employability, which is a state of constantly becoming ready for the labour market through repetitive employability skills training in order to constantly create a new economic identity.

Moreover, employability has become closely tied to the strict conditional requirements of the Welfare Reform Act (2012). The Employability Skills Programme subjects its learners to coercive psychological interventions to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes, for appropriate attitudes to achieve employability. It is an oppressive model of social control that ghettoises and surveilles unemployed learners in panopticon conditions and reinforces feelings of failure and blame if work is not obtained. The unemployed are churned through government programmes that, in the case of the learners in this study, have resulted in social exclusion from the labour market. This is a paradox given that social

inclusion was an aim of lifelong learning policies, but economic policies have failed the unemployed learner.

This trend of learning for the economy has resulted in a new version of the industrial trainer: the employability facilitator. Additionally, within the public sector, community adult education services also offer learning for the economy. This is creating new 'subjectivities' within the community education workforce, who are being coerced to deliver learning for the economy rather than social purpose education.

There has been a significant loss of community adult education and community development, as we once knew them, offering liberating models of adult education. However, these forms of provision still have a significant role to play in today's society in engaging the working class, who are experiencing social inequalities, in participating in learning for democracy. These educational opportunities provide ways in which the working class can "shape the society within which they live" (Crowther and Shaw, 2017, p.9). This process will nurture loyalty and a voice within working class communities.

### **What have been the major effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of the learners in the sample from these communities?**

The major effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of learners in this sample has been ontological insecurity; the restructuring of traditional gender roles; anomie; the re-defining of family life; devalued lives; poor working class education; and endless, repetitive, churning through employability training programmes.

Gendered organisation of work and kinship practices, in addition to other routine affective practices found in the social and cultural life of these communities, all

provided a sense of security to local people. “Ontological security”, based on maintaining routine was, “a stable mental state derived from a sense of continuity in regards to the events of one’s life” (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012, p.48). The decline of the traditional industries ruptured the “containing skin” (Walkerdine, 2010, p.91) that had held these communities together like glue. It had affectively contained anxieties and feelings of insecurity through the routine of work, kinship practices, and affective work and social relationships. But once ruptured, it shifted the mental state of the population from one of “ontological security” to “ontological insecurity”.

De-industrialisation has had different implications for men and women. The role of women was to take a different form from the previous one of domesticity, as de-industrialisation paradoxically resulted in an increase in insecure, low-paid, unskilled, non-unionised work for women in local factories. Redundant men did not take up these job opportunities as they did not possess the confidence for factory work, and inevitably the role of women was to substantially change. Women, out of economic necessity, took up low-paid factory jobs. However, this was the beginning of women moving from respectable domesticity into a precarious, low-paid labour market. It was also the beginning of role reversal within the family home, as men were no longer the breadwinners as they remained at home and became increasingly long-term unemployed while women went out to work. Changes in behaviour became visible in family life. According to McKenzie and Damaris (1982, p.166), “A new polarization between men and women was set up”.

The long-term impact has been evident in the now familiar pattern in the deterioration of mental health of people in the community (Jahod et al, 1933). In the case of these de-industrialised communities this was to create a culture of anomie. According to Durkheim (1893), “anomie occurs when a community has undergone significant changes in its economic fortunes”. Freedom from work was exhilarating at first, but in time men realised that they had no sense of purpose in their lives. A loss of work and their working class identity were exacerbated by poverty, and the



restructuring of the traditional roles of men and women. This reinforced a sense of failure and shame in these men who were (self) excluded from feminised workplaces; as women became employed in low-paid work in order to prevent family poverty, they became the main breadwinners.

Women, too, experienced ontological insecurity as they bore the brunt of these economic changes through gender violence that led to poor mental health, and often culminated in divorce. For many women this has resulted in a life of shame, as they are dependent on welfare benefits or low paid work, neither of which offer a route out of poverty.

Ontological insecurity has become a form of social control in the lives of these participants, as fear of the past still resonates in the present. They have memories of experiencing the harshness of the past in these former mining communities and have an inherent lack of confidence and feelings of no self-worth. De-industrialisation has not only disorientated their lives but also devalued them as people, leaving them feeling belittled, insecure and rejected. According to Skeggs (2013, p.2), such working class populations are “symbolically positioned” due to capitalist exploitation that brought about de-industrialisation, as this has “fixed” them and prevented them from moving through “physical social space”.

The effects of de-industrialisation were not just a one-off historical event but are felt in the ongoing daily lives of the participants. In everyday life they still face further devaluation. They are subjected to demeaning opinions and judgements by those in authority and wider society. Such opinions about those living in North East England’s deprived working class communities are circulated via the media and social media. Through this machinery of government and the media they are publicly shamed as immoral people living a life of dependency (Bhabha cited in Tyler, 2013, p.214). They have become known as welfare scroungers, the socially abject, or the underclass. They are judged as subjects who do not contribute to the economy but

live off taxpayers' money, despite most learners in this sample making valuable contributions to rebuilding the social fabric of their communities. These opinions are internalised by the learners.

This process of subjectification increases the anxiety and ontological insecurity of these learners. It is a force that is felt not just through political elites, social media and government agencies, but also in schools. State schooling that did not value the working class (Reay, 2009, p.24) has left long term scarring, a lack of confidence and self-belief, and feelings of failure from a young age in most of these adult learners. They have carried these feelings in their psyche throughout their adult lives.

Class has been produced in these communities by a political elite, who have devalued the working class through de-industrialisation. According to Skeggs (2013, p.3), "class is always made by and in the interests of those who have access to power and the circuits of symbolic distribution". Through the processes of de-industrialisation and subjectification, the ruling elite have imposed their authority and created differences within the working class between those who are respectable and those who are non-respectable.

Class is therefore no longer the differences between the working class and middle class where one is judged on one's practices and values through the "classing gaze" (Finch cited in Skeggs, 1998, p.4). The respectable working class are the ones who comply with a neoliberal labour market and have exchange value. Shame is imposed on those who do not achieve employment. They are seen as the non-respectable working class. The sample of learners participating in community adult education have refuted this ideology and have found a different way of becoming respectable other than through the neoliberal market. They may not have exchange value but they do have use-value in rebuilding the social fabric of their communities.

For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess and the way in which they use those assets and present them to employers. The broader context in which these skills are supposed to be of value is ignored and downplayed, as the individual is held accountable rather than labour market conditions and wider social, economic and institutional factors that influence a person's ability to find work.

Increasingly, the use of welfare and benefit sanctions in government policy is being deployed to discipline unemployed people into repetitive and fruitless searches for work. Being socially controlled through a lifelong learning system for the unemployed has contributed to them being churned between welfare, repetitive employability skills training and short-term work to the point of being socially excluded from the labour market, as these learners have not worked for many years. These learners describe experiencing considerable anxiety and frustration due to short-termism in lifelong learning and the labour market.

The key effect of de-industrialisation has been the way in which ontological insecurity has re-defined family life. Once traditional gender roles were fragmented and role reversal took place within the family, this contributed to feelings of ontological insecurity in men. As masculine work disappeared and any continuity of the traditional roles in their lives had been broken, this brought about feelings of failure and shame, and a deterioration in their mental health that increased their anxiety. This brought about a change in behaviour of men towards women that was expressed through patriarchal oppression, which was often accompanied by misuse of alcohol and drugs.

### **How has adult education shaped the position, disposition and identity of the learners studied?**

Learner identities have been fractured by structural economic change, the decline of traditional industries, and the fragmentation of communities that were once

dependent upon them. They have little control in choosing an identity in precarious times.

Personal identity is “a definition and evaluation of oneself in terms of idiosyncratic personal attributes” (Hogg and Tindale, 2005, p.142). Social identity is “a definition and evaluation of oneself in terms of shared attributes that define membership of the specific group one belongs to” (Hogg and Tindale, 2005, p.142). Personal identity is individualistic and tied to the personal self, as in the case of pursuing an economic identity, whereas a social identity is tied to the collective self where an individual contributes as a member of a group. The social reality is that the learners in this study have been left with a weak social identity, with little agency in choosing an identity, as they are churned through the Employability Skills Programme to supply a flexible labour market only to find that even this labour market no longer requires them.

The life stories reveal that no matter how many employability skills courses they attend, and no matter how many low-level vocational qualifications they achieve, they are unable to gain entry into a competitive but deficient labour market where the learners compete for few jobs. These learners’ identities are being shaped by the long-term effects of de-industrialisation that have atomised their communities; a poor formal education; a precarious economy that creates insecurity through flexibility of the workplace; and a strict welfare state that works closely with lifelong learning to ensure that the unemployed are socially controlled.

In this study, men are not replacing their social function in the community by volunteering or through social action. Many explanations are given as to why those living in relative deprivation do not contribute to community life. Van der Land & Doff (2010, p.432) explain the reason as being a “perceived decline of neighbourhood and social fragmentation” and Lim and Laurence (2015, p.319) suggest it is a “breakdown in community factors of cultural norms of trust”. Other

explanations of why these learners do not participate in the community relate to the fact that the men have lived with the long-term social and economic consequences and associated psychological effects of the Miners' Strike (1985) and the closure of the steel works. Restructuring of the economy has created flexibility and, as Sennett (1998, p.10) points out, short-term employment corrodes people's character as people need the security of long-term employment opportunities as this conveys commitment and loyalty to them. A culture of individualism puts the onus on the individual to look after himself at the expense of the collective good.

The stories reveal that these learners are not individually or collectively connected to the wider community through social, civic and cultural activities. This is partly due to relative deprivation, but also because they have withdrawn or 'exited' in a social sense from these communities that have become socially fragmented.

In contrast to the learners attending the Employability Skills Programme, those learners attending community adult education had a different experience, although they too came from the same socio-economic background. Ontological insecurity also affected this cohort of learners attending community adult education as it had a very similar effect on people's sense of self and their capacity to act. It was purposeful intervention – by different forms of adult education – that enabled these learners to shape a different identity.

In contrast, for the learners in this study, the personal development model of community adult education provided a starting point from which to begin to learn. People have different starting points which motivate them to learn, and that sets them off in different trajectories. Personal development can be the positive experience that enables people to connect with others and to progress to another stage with new-found confidence. Personal development can also offer a liberating learning experience to those seeking a purpose in life and who want to begin to see life differently. Personal development may increase confidence, reduce isolation, and

provide mutual support, as well as introducing the learner to broader social networks. It may act as a precursor to the radical tradition in the empowerment of an individual or group as it can become a liberating experience as learners begin to challenge oppression and inequalities that they face within their communities. In doing so, this is an education that is closely associated with turning ‘personal troubles’ into ‘public issues’ (Crowther and Shaw, 2017p.11).

Part of this study on community adult education focused on women’s experience of education that challenged traditional assumptions about women’s role in society, as well as offering therapeutic education, as a starting point for personal development. This enabled these women to construct new knowledge and challenge patriarchal oppression and oppressive structures. These women participated in return to learn courses to achieve a qualification, and in the long term they have shown ‘loyalty’ to their learning community as well as making a very valuable contribution to the wider community.

In adult education, learners are treated as citizens who have something to contribute to others and their community. This is in contrast to where the learners on welfare to work training programmes are seen to be psychologically deficit as they are unemployed. Community education learners participated in personal development education and did not seek to exit their community. These learners, once educated, stayed to fight and, in doing so, their once unheard voices now seek to call for social change within their communities. In this way, the different traditions of community adult education can be seen as a resource not only for resistance against deteriorating communities and social inequalities but in strengthening the identity of its learners.

The evidence for this draws on a small sample who voluntarily participated in community adult education that has reinvigorated their lives and given them a sense of purpose. These women and men have come to know who they are and what their relationship is with their community, and how to take part and act in making a

difference. In doing so, they have come to have a collective social identity (Hogg and Tindale, 2005, p.142) that has “use value” rather than an “exchange value” for the neoliberal labour market (Skeggs (2013, p.2). The findings indicate that there is a strong attachment by 3 women learners to their women’s learning community, whereby these women help to rebuild the lives of other women and in doing so act as a lifeline to each other. These 3 women and the 2 men contributed to rebuilding their communities through a network of relationships that have enabled their communities to function more effectively. Through this process, their often-unheard ‘voices’ are strengthened as they unite with each other and the wider community in challenging social inequalities through further grassroots practice of community adult education. In doing so, they have come to have a respectable identity that had been lost by the demise of the traditional roles of men and women. Community adult education has enabled these women and men to overcome their feelings of inferiority and be restored to the persons who they wanted to be. In doing so they have become “subjects of value” (Tyler, 2013, p.214).

These women and men demonstrate values of compassion and care for each other, and others in the wider community. They are now, through paid and volunteer roles, rebuilding their community, rebuilding the lives of people and creating a voice for the marginalised. Reclaiming respectability through community adult education, that was lost through the effects of de-industrialisation, has been aided by acts of helping others. In doing so, it has become a healing process for the individual and collective identity of these learners. Through community adult education, a culture of individualism is challenged, thus restoring what Freire (1972) identifies as one’s “ontological vocation” to become fully human and live life to the full, and in doing so have a social identity.

### **Does Hirschman’s theoretical model of responses to change provide a useful framework for understanding the experience of adult learners?**

There is an important contribution made in this study in that, whilst Hirschman’s framework has been useful in helping to understand people’s reactions to de-

industrialisation, the meaning of these has changed within a community context. Loyalty, for example, in the original framework was the opposite of voice, as people in the firm ‘stayed low’ in order to be saved from job loss. In this study, loyalty to the community has enabled individuals to benefit from support and provision, which has given them a lifeline for survival and a step up on the way to finding a voice. Exit, in the original framework, involved proactive workers getting ‘ahead of the curve’ by finding alternative employment before others. In this study, provision to enable exit does not deliver but instead demoralises individuals and undermines their capacity to act. It involves churning learners between welfare and employability training programmes and into short-term work where available; in these cases’ this has resulted in social exclusion from the labour market- the opposite of agency.

The framework was not only useful in thinking about how the Employability Skills Programme and different models of community adult education strengthen or weaken a learner’s subjectivity but also in making a distinction between ethical and unethical practices within the economic and public education models.

One important insight of the framework is in relation to exit: this study reveals how unemployed learners on the Employability Skills Programme are subject to disciplinary, psychological interventions that do not increase their chances of securing work but increase feelings of failure in welfare claimants as they shift the blame of unemployment from systematic failure in the labour market to the personal failure of the individual. Through these psychological interventions, individuals have been given a picture of being psychologically deficit, and that increases anxiety and reduces wellbeing in participants. In seeking solutions to structural unemployment, individuals are blamed for being jobless rather than an acknowledgment that this is due to a deficient labour market.

A further important insight the framework highlighted was in terms of loyalty. Community adult education is a democratising force that engages with the social



reality of the everyday lives of those experiencing socio-economic inequalities. In this study, those whose lives had been demoralised, once they had been educated, showed loyalty to their community. In doing so, it enabled them to reclaim their respectability as they began rebuilding their community, rebuilding the lives of others and creating a voice for the marginalised. The role of community adult education is very important in making these connections of loyalty and voice in community settings, but is currently oppressed by neoliberal governmentality.

The framework has provided a useful way of studying lifelong learning, and what was included and what was left out. Lifelong learning included the economic model at the expense of the social purpose and democratic models. This has brought a significant loss of loyalty and voice within communities, and those exiting through the economic model have become socially and economically excluded.

### **Limitations of the study**

De-industrialisation across North East England was widespread throughout the 1970s to the 1980s. There were no local authority areas that were not affected by de-industrialisation, for even if they did not have company closures they had residents who had worked in these companies who were declared redundant. This increased unemployment figures in all local authority areas at this time.

Initially, the study was to be focused geographically on six local authority areas across North East England that had experienced de-industrialisation. However, practical matters of access meant the geographical focus of the study was reduced. However, de-industrialisation and ongoing neoliberal policies and lack of economic investment have resulted in County Durham being one of the most deprived in England and therefore pivotal for this study on the effects of de-industrialisation on the lives of learners. The limitation of this for the study was that comparisons could be made between different de-industrialised areas in County Durham, but not between different

de-industrialised local authority areas across North East England. This would have enabled wider commonality and differences to be explored across NEE. Providing such insights could be the focus of future research study that would build upon the findings of this study.

Due to a shift in funding for learning for the economy since 1993, in addition to current austerity measures and funding cuts, the provision throughout this county was overwhelmingly focused on learning for the economy. There was little community adult education, as we once knew it, to be found. This prevented me from pursuing my goal of a research study focused on community adult education. To address this problem, a cross comparison study was developed, focused on those attending the government's Employability Skills Programme, as opposed to community adult education. At first, this appeared to be limiting the scope of my research. However, it has proved to be really useful to this study as it highlights the effectiveness and importance of community adult education traditions, and highlights why it is important to reintroduce them rather than traduce them, which has been the case since the mid-1990s. Having documentation of why these traditions mattered in the past, and how they can contribute to improve fragmented lives in the future, matters if we are to have a more equal society. This study makes a small contribution to this task.

In terms of the sample, whilst I was proactive in seeking to encourage participation from black and ethnic minority learners attending BME projects across the region into the study this approach did not prove successful. Once focused on County Durham and its border with the River Tyne communities only one of the five providers had engaged black and ethnic minority learners. These learners did not fit the criteria for the study (Chapter 4, p.120). The remaining providers were based in white, working class, rural areas of County Durham where 1.2 % of the population is black and ethnic minority (Durham Area Action Partnership Statistical Profile 2012, p.8) and where there was no attendance of BME learners at the time of engaging participants in the study. This was the reason for no participation by this group in the study.

A future research project could focus on 2 Black and Ethnic Minority Community Projects in different de-industrialised areas of NEE to explore how the ongoing effects of de-industrialisation and neoliberal policies are affecting their lives, and in what way participation in adult education is shaping their position, disposition and identity. Commonality and differences between two different deindustrialised areas could be explored.

The justification for my research was that I wanted to add something new to the literature field as there is very little already written that captures what learners have experienced from the effects of de-industrialisation in the coalfield and rust belt areas of County Durham. Any studies are mostly quantitative and focused on the evaluation of provision, or data collected to inform funding bids and target outcomes. Also, I wanted to know if participation in community adult education and employability skills programmes, in de-industrialised areas, had changed identities and enabled people to take more control of their lives. In addition, Hirschman's theory has been used as a theoretical framework for business organisations, but not local communities, as in this study. It was important to understand what such categories might mean in this very different context of change. This has proved a really useful approach, and this theoretical framework could be applied in the future to adult education research studies in community settings.

### **Final Comment**

I undertook my PhD research study as I needed to know more about how communities such as those in County Durham have come to experience such socio-economic blows, and why, at a time of greatest need, funding was never forthcoming but constantly cut back.

What I learnt was the brutality of neoliberalism and neoliberal governmentality that has changed economic and educational policy and, in doing so, fragmented lives and atomised working class communities. Emotionally, I have learnt to live with the fragmented lives of those I interviewed. Through listening to interview tapes and reading and reflecting on their transcripts I have come to a much deeper understanding of how the long term effects of de-industrialisation has injured the lives of the learners, and how learning for the economy has increased their anxiety and weakened their subjectivity. This understanding would not have been gained through teaching in a classroom or a training setting.

The restructuring of the economy to a precarious, insecure economy has affected the formation of these lives and redefined family life and gender relationships. The workhouse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been replaced by the panopticon conditions found within the premises of providers who deliver the Employability Skills Programme. As a socialist feminist researcher I have learnt how beneficial the different traditions of community adult education can be in restoring injured lives that were devalued. Community adult education has helped to replace the traditional gendered roles of its learners with a new narrative. Through its different traditions it strengthens the learners' subjectivity by educating them to become loyal in rebuilding their atomised communities and the lives of others. In doing so the learners in this study reclaimed their respectability. Against this background, the importance of reading the work of Jim Crowther and Zygmunt Bauman, Beverley Skeggs, Barbara Merrill, Diane Reay and Valerie Walkerdine has been crucial and invaluable in providing me with a much greater insight to inform my study.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### County Durham Socio-Economic Statistics 2015

- County Durham is the 62nd most deprived local authority in England 326 (ID2015)
- 51 super output areas -deprived localities of deprivation (ID 2015)
- Economically inactive 87,200 (27%) which includes 27,700 who are long term sick due to psychological effects of de-industrialisation and industrial diseases
- 41,510 (12.7%) claiming out of work benefits
- 28,880 claiming incapacity benefit
- 20,100 (22.7%) of children live in child poverty
- Educationally the county is below the national average with 19% of population with no qualifications

(Durham County Council Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Report, Oct 2015)

Available at:

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s55511/Welfare%20reform%20and%20poverty%20issues%20Appx%202%20Cab%20Report.pdf>

[Accessed: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 20.18]

## **Domestic abuse and alcohol abuse and poor mental health in women in County Durham**

### **1.Domestic Abuse**

- In 2005-2006, domestic violence accounted for 25% of all recorded violent crimes in County Durham (County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2006-2008).
- Since 2010 /11 referrals to Domestic Abuse Outreach Services have increased from 1,864 during 2010/11 to 2,003 in 2011/12, an overall increase of 7.5%.

(County Durham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2012-2015, p.17).

Available at:

[http://content.durham.gov.uk/PDFRepository/County\\_Durham\\_Domestic\\_Abuse\\_Strategy\\_2012\\_2015\\_Final.pdf](http://content.durham.gov.uk/PDFRepository/County_Durham_Domestic_Abuse_Strategy_2012_2015_Final.pdf)

[Accessed: 30th May, 2016 at 12.40]

### **2. Alcohol Abuse**

- Alcohol related mortality for females has increased in 2013 to a rate of 35.7 per 100,000 and is now significantly higher than the rate for England at 28.4 per 100,000. (p.12).
- County Durham has the 4th highest rate in the North East for alcohol related mortality. (p.12).
- County Durham has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of mortality from chronic liver disease among females in the North East. (p.11).

(County Durham Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2012-2015, p.11-12).

Available at:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/4073/Safe-Durham-Alcohol-Harm-Reduction-Strategy-2012---2015/pdf/AlcoholHarmReductionStrategy.pdf>

[Accessed: 30th May, 2016 at 13.25]

### **3. Mental Health in County Durham**

- Poor mental health for depression in population is higher than that national average at 15% compared to 11.68% (Foden,2014)
- The number of referrals for Adult Mental Health Professional (AMHP) assessments for adults with mental health needs increased by 40% when comparing 2010/11 with 2014/15, and by 26.9% when comparing 2014/15 figures with 2015/16. (p.5)
- There are over 4,600 people in County Durham registered with GP's with a diagnosis of mental illness. More than 50,000 have a common mental disorder, for example, anxiety and depression. (p.5)
- The number of adults assessed with mental health needs increased by 19.2% between 2010/11 and 2014/15. (p.5)
- Between 2012 and 2014, the suicide rate (13.3 per 100,000 population) is higher than the England average of 8.9. (p.6).

**(County Durham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Key Messages 2015, p.5 -6).**

Available at:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/9140/JSNA-2015-key-messages/pdf/CountyDurhamJSNAKeyMessages2015.pdf>

[Accessed: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 14.14]

**Nationally:**

- Recorded rates of anxiety and depression are between one and a half and two times higher in women than in men.
- Rates of self-harm are two to three times higher in women than in men.

**(County Durham Public Mental Health Strategy 2013-2017, p.22 .....pp. 26-33)**

Available at:

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s35630/Item%208b%20-%20Public%20Mental%20Health%20Strategy.pdf> [Accessed: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 15.2

### **Durham Health Profile (2016)**

- Poor mental health for depression in the population is higher than the national average and stands at 14.87% compared to 11.68%.
- Hospital admissions for alcohol abuse stands at 30.6% compared with national average at 23%. be expected.
- Deprivation is higher than the national average and about 22.7% (20,100) children live in poverty.
- Life expectancy for men and women is lower than the England average with life expectancy being 7.0 years lower for men and 7.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of County Durham.
- Rates of breastfeeding are worse than the England average.
- Rates of suicide are worse than the England average.
- 27.4% of adults are classified as obese.
- The rate of alcohol-related harm hospital stays was 788 per 100,000, worse than the England average. This represents 4,053 stays per year.
- The rate of self-harm hospital stays was 287.7 per 100,000, worse than the England average. This represents 1,471 stays per year.
- The rate of smoking related deaths was 381 per 100,000, worse than the England average. This represents 1,117 deaths per year.

### **(Durham County Council, Health and Wellbeing Board, County Durham Health Profile 2015)**

Available at:

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s58563/Item%209%20-%20County%20Durham%20Health%20Profile%202015.pdf>

[Accessed: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 17.10]

**Durham County Council Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Report (October 2015)**

The impact of welfare reform and austerity measures on County Durham:

- The government will reduce public sector funds in County Durham by 40% between 2011-2017 (with savings of £258m from 2011-2020).
- Impact of welfare reform (district data) of £590 per annum loss per working age adult.
- From 2015, over 71,000 households in County Durham will be affected by Universal Credit which is a change in the benefit system. This is equivalent to over one third of all households.
- 18,900 fewer families are now claiming tax credits compared to 2011. The number of families claiming tax credits has fallen from more than one in four households, to less than one in five.
- The number of people claiming the main out of work benefits has fallen from 56,000 in 2009 to 41,510 in June 2015, which is the lowest level for 16 years.
- There has been an increase in the percentage of Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants receiving adverse sanctions since new rules were introduced in October 2012. The rate in the county now stands at 5.6 percent compared to the national average of 4.1 percent.
- Foodbanks in the county have helped more than 14,300 people in the last 12 months.
- The gap between the national rate for child poverty and that in County Durham has widened by 2.7 percentage points between 2007 and 2012. The biggest increase came between 2008 and 2009 as the recession took hold.
- The number of children affected in County Durham between 2007 and 2012 remained between 20,000 and 21,000.
- In 2007, 22.9 percent of County Durham children aged under 16 were in families receiving less than 60 percent of median national income. This was

only slightly higher than the national rate of 21.8 percent. However, the latest data from 2012 indicates the gap has grown to three times the size with County Durham at 22.7 percent and England 18.9 percent.

(Durham County Council Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Report, Oct 2015). Available at: <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s55511/Welfare%20reform%20and%20poverty%20issues%20Appx%202%20Cab%20Report.pdf> [Accessed: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 20.18]

**2010-2016 -Actual expenditure on Adult Further Education by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)**

- Adult Skills Budget- spending fell by 32% in cash terms between 2010-11 and 2015-16, from £3.63 billion to £2.48 billion.
- Within the ASB, expenditure on adult apprenticeships increased from £0.45 billion to £0.71 billion over the period (an increase of 58%).
- Non-apprenticeship ASB spending fell by 54%, from £2.50 billion to £1.14 billion.
- Expenditure on Community Learning stayed around £210 million between 2010-11 and 2014-15, before increasing to £215 million in 2015-16, in order to provide an additional £5 million for pilot courses to help adults recover from mild to moderate mental illness (Foster, 2017, p.3).
- 2016-2017 onwards – a new Adult Further Education Budget of £1.5billion is a single funding line which replaces what has been 3 separate funding lines: funding for Adult Further Education outside of apprenticeships; Community Learning and Discretionary Learner Support (p.1. of letter cited in Foster, 2017, p.16)
- Community Learning budget is no longer ring fenced from 2016 onwards:

“We will no longer provide a separate Community Learning budget. As part of the move to simplification and localism and all learning providers will be able to offer non-accredited learning if providers and local commissions consider such activity as relevant” (p.6 of letter cited in Foster, 2017, p.16).

Letter by Nick Boles Minister of State for Skills, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 (p.6).

House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper No: 7708, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2017 in

Adult Further Education Funding in England since 2010 (Foster, 2017, p.16).

[www.researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7708/CBP-7708.pdf](http://www.researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7708/CBP-7708.pdf)



## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **Can you tell me about your life?**

#### **What is this research project about?**

This project is about individuals who have borne the brunt of industrial decline in North East England since the early 1970s to the present day.

The aim of the project is to explore through life history interviews the effects of community adult education on the lives of learners who have experienced industrial decline in their local area.

I am particularly interested in listening to your story and hope that you will take this opportunity to volunteer to contribute to this research project.

#### **Who should take part?**

I would like to speak to both male and female learners, including those from ethnic minority groups.

To participate in the project you need to be:

- a) Aged 30 years plus and have been born into and continue to live in a community that has experienced industrial decline.
- b) Participating in community adult education for a minimum of two years and this can be on a continuous or discontinuous basis.

#### **How do I get involved?**

Once you have expressed an interest in the project to your tutor then my role as the researcher for the project is to meet with you at a convenient time during the day at your local community adult education centre.

The **first meeting** will be to explain the research project and answer any questions you may have. I will provide you with a voluntary consent form to complete so that you can confirm that you are happy to be interviewed for the research project.

Through the theme of ‘can you tell me about your life?’ a life history interview will take place. This will last for no longer than 60 minutes. The focus of the life history interview will be on the influences of family life, education and industrial decline on your life, why you have returned to learn and how participation in community adult education has brought about any changes to your life?

At the **second meeting** the focus will be to provide you with the opportunity to read or listen to a summary of your life history and confirm that it is an accurate account. You have the opportunity at this stage to make any changes to your account. This meeting will last for between 60 to 75 minutes.

### **How may you benefit from participating in this research project?**

It provides a chance for you to tell your side of the story which would not otherwise be heard. It is also a chance for you to voice your concerns on the problems faced by communities in North East England that have suffered industrial decline, and the ways in which community adult education is helping you to face these problems.

### **Ethical Considerations**

You can stop the interview at any time, or choose not to answer certain questions.

You have a right to withdraw from the project at anytime.

You have a right to inform the researcher in what way you wish your interview to be recorded. Example by audio tape recording or word processed at interview by the researcher.

If you have literacy difficulties this should not be a barrier to you taking part in this project as the researcher will provide appropriate support throughout each interview.

There is minimal risk in participating in this research project. If, however, you find the sharing of information a difficult or emotional experience and you require the support of an appropriate agency then please advise the researcher at any time during the interview.

Your privacy will be protected and your anonymity guaranteed as all information collected will be coded to prevent you from being identified. This will ensure your present and future confidentiality and anonymity.

The information you provide will contribute to a thesis that Jo Forster is writing for her PhD and will be stored in a secured area within the Institute of Education, Community and Society, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh.

### **Jo Forster**

Jo Forster has worked in different roles in adult education in North East England and is currently studying for her PhD at the Institute of Education, Community and Society, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh.

Email: [m.j.forster@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.forster@sms.ed.ac.uk)

### **Informed Consent Statement**

1. I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time, without giving any reason.
2. I am aware of what my participation will involve.
3. I understand that there may be a minimal risk involved in the participation of this study but it is anticipated that this is no greater than that encountered in daily life.
4. All questions that I have about the research project have been satisfactorily answered.

I agree to participate. Yes /No (delete as appropriate)

Participant's signature:

Participant's names (please print)

#### **Contact details:**

Jo Forster

PhD Student/Researcher

Institute for Education, Community and Society

University of Edinburgh

The Moray House School of Education

St John's Land

Holyrood Road

Edinburgh

EH8 8AQ

Email: m.j.forster@sms.ed.ac.uk

## **Interview Guide -Flexible Research Questions for Participants**

### **Can you tell me about your life?**

#### **Position**

1. What effect has the closure of local industries had on you as an individual/on family life? If 'yes' what are these effects?
2. How did you come to attend this course/project?
3. Tell me about your participation on this course?
4. Why have you re- engaged with learning?
5. What changes (or turning points) occurred in your life prior to you first engaging with learning?
6. What other learning or activities do you engage with outside of this project?

#### **Disposition**

7. Have your experiences of compulsory education been positive or negative experiences?
8. How did it feel when you first re-engaged with community adult learning?
7. How confident were you (or not confident)? – If not confident why was this?
8. Have there been any barriers to your participation in community adult learning or government programme?

#### **Identity**

9. Has participation in CAE /E. P. helped you to take up paid employment (a) in the local community (b) external to community?
10. Has participation in CAE/E.P. enabled you to progress to further learning opportunities (a) with this community provider (b) another community provider (c) provider external to the community?
11. Has participation in CAE/E.P. helped you to remain in your community and begin to make a valuable contribution to community life?
12. Has participating in CAE/E.P. made you more politically aware of those issues affecting your community and enabled you to express your concerns?
13. Has participating in CAE/E.P. enabled you to bring about social change in your community?
14. Has CAE/E.P. provided learning opportunities to address the problems you have faced due to the effects of de- industrialisation in your local area?
15. How has CAE/E.P. transformed your life and has it enabled you to have achieve a new identity?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add to your interview?

**(a) CAE is abbreviation for Community Adult Education; (b) E.P. is abbreviation for Employability Programm**

### Transcription and Validation Record of Interviews Conducted with Learners

Transcript Record No:	Date of Interview	Date of Validation	Learner/Key Member Personnel	Organisation	Male/Female	Transcript Completed
AA 811-0087	15.5.14	29.5.14	Learner	B.C.	Male	Yes
A811-0091	15.5.14	29.5.14	Learner	B.C.	Female	Yes
A811-0093	15.5.14	29.5.14	Learner	B.C.	Female	Yes
A811-0094	15.5.14	29.5.14	Learner	B.C.	Male	Yes
A811-0095	22.5.14	12&16.6.14	Learner	EDP	Female	Yes
A811-0097	9.6.14	18.6.14	Learner	ALW	Female	Yes
A811-0101	16.6.14	2.7.14	Learner	EDP	Male	Yes
A811-0102	16.6.14	23.7.14	Learner	EDP	Male	Yes
A811-0103	16.6.14	24.7.14 (telephone)	Learner	EDP	Male	Yes
University Tape Recorder	10.3.14	17.3.14	Learner	RICHP	Female	Yes
A811-0106	18.6.14	16.7.14	Learner	ALW	Female	Yes
A811-0108	18.6.14	16.7.14	Learner	ALW	Female	Yes
A811-0110	23.6.14	7.7.14	Learner	DES	Male	Yes
A811-0111	23.6.14	7.7.14	Learner	DES	Male	Yes
A811-0112	2.7.14	24.7.14 (email)	Learner	EDP	Male	Yes
A811-0114	7.7.14	14.7.14	Learner	DES	Male	Yes

